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not depend upon a legislative grant of authority. Although the notice can be provided in most situations as a matter of comity, situations may arise, especially in wartime, in which the President must act promptly under his constitutional grants of executive power and authority as Commander in Chief while protecting sensitive national security information. The executive branch shall construe these sections in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority.

Section 119 provides for the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to the Congress with details of proposed actions to encourage certain cooperating nations to assume a greater share of the common defense burden. The executive branch shall construe this provision in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to withhold information, the disclosure of which could impair foreign relations, the national security, the deliberative processes of the Executive, or the performance of the Executive's constitutional duties. The Secretary of Defense will, of course, continue as a matter of comity to keep the Congress appropriately informed of the matters addressed by section 119.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 23, 2002.

NOTE: H.R. 5011, approved October 23, was assigned Public Law No. 107–249.

Remarks on Children's Online Safety
October 23, 2002

Thank you all for coming. Welcome to the White House. And thanks for the work that most of you do on behalf of protecting this country's children. Because children are so vulnerable, they need the constant protection of adults. And because children are so vulnerable, they're often the targets of cruel and ruthless criminals.

I am deeply saddened by the recent tragedy that we've seen here in Washington. There is a ruthless person on the loose. I've ordered the full resources of the Federal Government to help local law enforcement officials in their efforts to capture this person. Laura and I join our fellow Americans in prayer as we pray for the families and friends who have lost loved ones, as we pray for the safety of our fellow citizens, as we pray for the quick end to this period of violence and fear.

Protecting children from sexual exploitation is also a priority. It needs to be a priority and is a priority of this country. Earlier this month, I convened the first ever White House Conference on Missing, Exploited, and Runaway Children, and those efforts continue today.

I've just met with law enforcement representatives from the Federal, State, and local level from several States who spend their time tracking down and prosecuting online predators. These officials are impressive people. They're the best of America. They're doing difficult and disturbing and essential work. And I thank them for coming here today.

Our Nation has made this commitment: Anyone who targets a child for harm will be a primary target of law enforcement. That's our commitment. Anyone who takes the life or innocence of a child will be punished to the full extent of the law.

Today I want to discuss with you several aggressive steps we are taking to protect our children from exploitation and from danger on the Internet.

I appreciate so very much Robert Mueller, the Director of the FBI, is here

with us today. I thank you for your service, for your good work. I want to thank the Deputy Attorney General of the Department of Justice, Larry Thompson, for being here. Mr. Deputy, thanks for coming. Bob Bonners, the Commissioner of the U.S. Customs Service, is with us today. They play an integral role in helping to catch these predators overseas.

Federal, State, and law enforcement officers and prosecutors who are here with us today, ranging from California to Alabama to Maryland—from all around the country. I want to thank you all for being here to hear this progress and commitment that we share for our country.

When a child's life or innocence is taken, a grave and unforgivable act has occurred. A parent's worst nightmare has become real. And you all here are on the frontlines of this great struggle to see to it that no parent has to live through the nightmare. That's what you're doing.

The Internet is a remarkable technology. We've all learned that. It's revolutionized education, vastly increased the flow of information, increases our knowledge. We're now in closer touch with our family and friends. People are now connected across the globe. It's an exciting tool. But more than half of our Nation children now online—let me start over—more than half of the Nation is now online, and 75 percent of the children are online.

The flow of information is freer and broader. Yet the new freedom presents us with an unprecedented challenge, a technology that brings knowledge also brings obscenity and danger. Until recently, the worst kind of pornography was mainly limited to red-light districts or restricted to adults or confined by geography, isolated by shame. With the Internet, pornography is now instantly available to any child who has a computer. And in the hands of the wrong people, in the hands of incredibly wicked people, the Internet is a tool that lures children into real danger.

Sexual predators use the Internet to distribute child pornography and obscenity. They use the Internet to engage in sexually explicit conversations. They use the Internet to lure children out of the safety of their homes into harm's way. Every day, millions of children log on to the Internet, and every day we learn more about the evil of the world that has crept into it. In a single year, one in four children between the ages of 10 and 17 is voluntarily—involuntarily exposed to pornography. That's one in four children. One in five children receives a sexual solicitation over the Internet. One in 17 children is threatened or harassed. We've got a widespread problem, and we're going to deal with it.

We don't accept this kind of degrading. It's unacceptable to America. We don't accept offensive conduct like this in our schools, in the commercial establishments, and we can't accept it in our homes. We cannot allow this to happen to our children. The chief responsibility to protect America's children lies with their parents. You are responsible for the welfare of your child. It's your responsibility.

There are several practical things parents can do to protect their children from the dangers of online predators. First of all, pay attention to your children. If you love your children, pay attention to them. Know what they're doing. Share your experience with your children. Make it clear to your children about the potential online dangers they face. Make it clear to them the kinds of web sites they need to avoid.

Children need to be told to never provide personal information to anyone online. It seems like a simple parental responsibility. Mothers and dads all across America need to do their job and make it clear to their children there can be danger by providing personal information. Don't share any passwords—that's a logical thing for a mom or a dad to do, tell their children not to share a password with a total stranger. Don't agree to meet with somebody they've never met. Don't agree to meet

with somebody that chats them up on the Internet, unless the mom or dad is with them.

Parents should keep computers in a central location and check up on what their kids are doing. They ought to not ignore what their children are doing. They ought to pay attention to their children. They have a responsibility. A mother or dad ought to pay just as much attention to their child when they're on the Internet as if they're in the playground or walking in the mall.

Parents have the first and foremost responsibility. Yet we as a society share this duty as well, and that's what we were talking about today. Parents need allies in the upbringing of their children. Our Nation should make the essential work of mothers and fathers easier, not harder. Our Government, at every level, must take the side of responsible parents, and we will.

We're waging an aggressive nationwide effort to prevent the use of the Internet to sexually exploit and endanger children. That's what we're doing. I want to share some of that with you today. Through an FBI program called Innocent Images, we identify, we investigate, and we prosecute sexual predators across the country.

FBI agents are obtaining evidence of criminal Internet activity by conducting undercover operations, using fictitious screen names and entering into online chat rooms. I had the honor of listening to one such FBI agent today. She was telling us what it's like to deal with these sick minds. Interesting, afterwards I said, "It must be tough to do the job you do." She says, "I've got two children. I don't want it to ever happen to any child." I appreciate your dedication.

Innocent Images prosecutions increased by more than 50 percent over the last 2 years. We're making progress. Just like we're hunting the terrorists down one at a time, we're hunting these predators down one at a time too. Based on the progress, I'm pleased to announce that we will expand this program and significantly increase the funding in the next fiscal year. We will also seek to almost double funding for the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Forces, from $6.5 million in fiscal year 2002 to $12.5 million in fiscal 2003. These task forces help State and local authorities enforce laws against child pornography and exploitation.

Since 1998, the task forces have helped train more than 1,500 prosecutors and 1,900 investigators. They've served 700 search warrants and 1,400 subpoenas. The task forces have provided direct, investigative assistance in more than 3,000 cases. They've arrested more than 1,400 suspects. These task forces are a great success. They're a great success because we've got a lot of good people working on these projects, a lot of dedicated Americans whose stomachs turn when they realize what's happening to our children, great Americans who decided to do something about it. This additional funding I've announced means that in—we'll increase the number of regional task forces up to 40 around the country.

Our efforts to fight Internet exploitation of children extend throughout this Government, throughout all levels of government. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service provides an important role in tracking sexual predators, because child pornographers often use the mail to purchase obscene materials off the Internet. In Operation Avalanche, postal inspectors created an undercover web site which they used to bring down what is to believe—what is believed to be the largest commercial child pornography enterprise ever encountered by law enforcement authorities in the United States. It started in Texas. It ended in Texas because of the hard work of the postal inspectors, the good work of prosecutors, and the sentencing of one tough Federal judge.

The Customs Service is conducting Operation Hamlet, which earlier this year dismantled an international ring of child molesters, an international ring of sick minds. Acting on a tip from European authorities,

customs officers tracked down child molesters in the United States, many of whom were molesting their own children and distributing the images of these children on the Internet. Authorities have identified 25 individuals involved in this ring, 14 of whom were Americans. Through Operation Hamlet, 65 children have been rescued.

We're taking aggressive steps to protect children from exploitation and victimization. And the United States Congress can help by passing the "Child Obscenity and Pornography Prevention Act." The House has passed this important bill, and I want to thank them for their good work.

The House passed a bill which makes it illegal for child pornographers to disseminate obscene, computer-generated images of children. It's an important piece of legislation. The Senate needs to act soon. The Senate needs to get moving and join the House in providing our prosecutors with the tools necessary to help shut down this obscenity, this crime—these crimes against children.

When a child's life or innocence is taken, a grave and unforgivable act has occurred. A parent's worst nightmare has come real. The people in this room are on the frontlines of a great struggle, determined to see that no parent is forced to live through a nightmare.

I'm tremendously grateful for the good works. I want to thank you all for being true patriots. I want you to know, at the Federal level, we're joining in the fight. We'll go after them, one person at a time, to make America a promising place for everybody who lives here.

May God bless your work, and may God bless America. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:15 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to the sniper attacks in the Washington, DC, area which began October 2 and left 10 dead and 3 injured. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Statement on Signing the Russian Democracy Act of 2002
October 23, 2002

I have today signed into law H.R. 2121, the "Russian Democracy Act of 2002." This Act seeks to promote democracy, the rule of law, and an independent media in the Russian Federation.

Section 3(b) of the Act purports to establish U.S. policy towards Russia. My approval of the Act does not constitute my adoption of the statements of policy in section 3(b) as U.S. foreign policy. Given the Constitution's commitment to the presidency of the authority to conduct the Nation's foreign affairs, the executive branch shall construe such policy statements as advisory, giving them the due weight that comity between the legislative and executive branches should require, to the extent consistent with U.S. foreign policy.

GEORGE W. BUSH

The White House,
October 23, 2002.

NOTE: H.R. 2121, approved October 23, was assigned Public Law No. 107–246.