AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

information, of course, we'll be glad to give it to you. But it seems to——

Q. Why now? Why now? Is this a new get-tough policy?

The President. No, no. The violations—the principal violations of the no-fly zone have been by helicopters, which could easily land. We've not had a fixed-wing violation reported of any kind, much less one we were in a position to do something about, to the best of my information, since last fall, since September. Those are much more serious because of the capacity they have to engage in military conduct from the air. Our mandate under the United Nations was to enforce the no-fly zone to eliminate the prospect that the war could be carried into the air.

Q. How were you informed, President Clinton? How did you learn of this, sir?

The President. Early, early this morning I was notified.

NOTE: The exchange began at 8:05 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion at Wilbur Wright College in Chicago

February 28, 1994

The President. I'm glad to see all of you. I'm glad to also be back at Wright Community College where I first came in December of 1992, although, Congressmen and mayors, you will remember, it was in a different facility. This is much nicer and newer. It's good to be back here.

We're here to talk about two things that relate to one another, crime and health care. It's appropriate that we're having this discussion today because today the Brady bill becomes law. It requires background checks on anyone who buys a handgun or gun and will help to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and people who are mentally unfit. It will prevent now, we know based on research, thousands of handgun murders all across our country. Here in Illinois, where you already have a tough law similar to the Brady law, it will prevent people who should not have guns from buying guns in other States, using them here to commit crimes.

Before we begin, I'd like to talk with Jim Brady who made history with his heroic efforts, along with his wonderful wife, Sarah, to pass this bill. They worked for 7 long years to pass it. I want to say Congressman Rostenkowski has supported the bill all along the way, but there was surprisingly continuing opposition in Congress. It all melted away last year. I hope that our campaign and election had something to do with it. But for whatever reason, we had a good, good, strong bipartisan measure of support for the Brady bill. It's now the law as of today.

And I just wanted—I've got Jim Brady on the phone, I think. And I wanted to congratulate him and thank him for his efforts. Jim, are you on the phone?

James Brady. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Is Sarah there?

Sarah Brady. I'm right here, sir.

The President. Well, it's nice to hear you both.

Mrs. Brady. Well, it's good to hear from you.

The President. As you know, I'm here in Chicago with a lot of people who understand the importance of what you've done. I'm here with doctors and other health care professionals who treat gunshot victims and people who are recovering from wounds. So I'm sure they're all very grateful to you, just as I am today.

Mrs. Brady. Well, we thank you for your leadership and for their support. It took a real team effort to get this passed, and we thank you very much for it.

The President. Well, I know that you believe this is just the beginning in our fight, and I know that you've got a lot of other objectives you want to try to achieve. I want you to know that we're going to be in there pulling for you and working with you.

Mrs. Brady. Well, thank you. We appreciate it.

Mr. Brady. We can't lose then.

The President. You know, today, Secretary Bentsen is announcing that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is taking an assault weapon called the ''street sweeper'' off the free market.

Mr. Brady. Yeah.

Mrs. Brady. That's a wonderful move, and we applaud that highly.

The President. The weapon was originally developed for crowd control in South Africa. Several years ago, the U.S. Government banned it from being imported, but it's still made and sold here. So today, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms is reclassifying the ''street sweeper'' and another assault weapon, the USAS–12, as destructive devices, increasing the taxes on manufacturers and dealers and requiring the buyers to take extraordinary measures. Starting tomorrow, if you want to buy one, you have to appear in person, provide a photo ID with fingerprints, and have a local law enforcement officer verify that the buyer can own it in his home State. And that, I think, will make a big difference.

So we're going to keep working on these things; we're going to try to pass this crime bill, including the assault weapons ban in it. I know you're going to help us. And I just want to say on behalf of Chairman Rostenkowski and Mayor Daley and myself and all these fine health professionals that are here, we appreciate you and we're grateful to you, and I hope you have a great celebration today.

Mr. Brady. Thank you, Mr. President.

Mrs. Brady. Thank you.

The President. Thanks, Sarah. Bye, Jim.

Mr. Brady. Bye now.

The President. Take care.

[*At this point, the telephone conversation ended.*]

Well, I'm glad we could take a little time to talk to them. You know, Jim Brady has paid a terrific price for the fact that we didn't have the Brady bill when he was wounded. I think it's remarkable that he and his wife are continuing to work on these matters and are continuing to get out there.

Chairman Rostenkowski, I'm glad to see you here today. Glad to have a chance to talk about this crime issue, which you've been interested in for a long time and how it relates to the health care bill that we're working on in Congress now. Mayor Daley, I'm glad you're here. I know that you were the State's attorney before you were mayor, and I know you've worked very hard on the community policing. And every time I've ever talked with you, we've started our conversation with a discussion of crime. So I'm glad that you joined us here today.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the crime bill that's before the Congress and then introduce the people here around the table and then invite the rest of you who are here, if we have time, to make some comments, because I think it's very important that we see that this crime problem is being manifested as a public health problem, too, and that many of you who deal with the cost and the human tragedy of this can speak very dramatically to why we need to change our laws and our policies.

Our crime bill does a number of things. It contains a ''three strikes and you're out'' provision written properly to really cover people who commit three consecutive violent crimes. It gives us 100,000 more police officers so that we can do more community policing. We know that that lowers the crime rate, if you have properly trained police officers on the streets, in the communities, who know the neighbors and know the kids. It bans assault weapons, and it provides funds for things like drug treatment and alternative treatment for first-time young offenders, like community boot camps.

Today, I'm hoping that your presence here will help not only people in Chicago and Illinois but people all across America learn more about how the crisis in crime and violence is linked to the health care crisis in America.

Last week, physicians from Chicago area trauma centers had a news conference with the Cook County medical examiner, Dr. Edmund Donahue. They reported that largely because of the proliferation of rapid-fire automatic and semi-automatic and assault weapons, gun violence has become one of the leading health problems in the Chicago area. More than 2,500 people every year are treated for gunshot wounds in Chicago area emergency rooms, and caring for them in the emergency rooms costs $37 million in this one community. In 1987, at Cook County Hospital, gunshot wounds accounted for 15 percent of the total funds used for the care of trauma patients. By 1992, this number had increased from 15 percent to 35 percent.

At the Cook County Hospital trauma unit, from 1987 to 1992, the number of admissions for gunshot wounds increased from 449 to 1,220 and accounted for 70 percent of the overall increase in admissions. That is a stunning fact. And all across Illinois, 1992 was the first year in this State where more people were killed by guns than by auto accidents.

According to an article in the Journal of the American Medical Association, gunshot wounds are expected to become the Nation's leading cause of traumatic death this year. From 1987 through 1992, 858,000 armed attacks took place every year, and in 1991 and 1992, 16,000 people were murdered with firearms each year. This adds about $4 billion a year to hospital costs, and too often, of course, when one of us is struck with a bullet, the rest of us are stuck with the bill. About 80 percent of the patients who suffer firearm injuries aren't adequately insured or eligible for Government medical programs like Medicaid. So public hospitals cover the costs of the uninsured. Private hospitals charge higher rates for those who can pay, so the rest of us pay higher hospital bills, higher insurance premiums, and higher taxes.

This morning I want to talk with you and let you basically talk to me and tell me whatever's on your mind about what we need to do and what you have experienced. The Mayor and Chairman Rostenkowski and I have decided we'd like to hear from you first, and then we may want to ask you some questions. And I know there are some other very distinguished people here, too, in the audience who may want to say some things. But let's start with the Chicago Police Superintendent, Matt Rodriguez, a strong advocate of community policing. And I want to thank you, sir, for working with our national service program to implement our summer-of-safety where we're going to have several thousand young people working with police forces all across America to try to reduce the crime rate and relate better to the neighborhoods of this country this year. I thank you for that, and I want to give you the microphone for whatever you might like to say.

[*At this point, Mr. Rodriguez discussed the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) and explained that while the homicide rate is down in Chicago, the public's fear of crime has increased.*]

The President. I think one of the reasons that's happening is the numbers I just read off. While the overall crime rate is going down, even the murder rate is dropping in many of our cities, especially where community policing strategies have been implemented, the violence among young people seems to be on the rise. And among young people who are shot with these semi-automatic weapons, a gunshot wound is more likely to end in death than it was just 5 or 10 years ago because you're likely to have more bullets in your body. I mean, there's a lot of evidence now to that effect.

So I think that the law enforcement folks in this country are not getting the credit they deserve in many cities, being able to bring the crime rate down through community strategies. But a lot of it is the sheer violence of certain particular things, and I think the widespread use of these assault weapons in gang settings.

Mr. Rodriguez. The fastest growing segment of our criminal population are the young people. They're increasingly becoming the offenders. We find it again here in Chicago and across the country. That is the same indication I'm getting from other chiefs throughout the country.

The President. Dr. Statter, Dr. Mindy Statter is the director of pediatric trauma at the University of Chicago Medical Center. Her unit is Level I, which means she gets the most intense and vulnerable trauma cases. Would you like to make a few comments?

[*At this point, Dr. Statter discussed the increasing number of injuries being caused by adolescent violence and addressed the high cost of helping these victims, physically and psychologically.*]

The President. Do you have any—how long have you been doing this work?

Dr. Statter. I've been at Wyler for 2 years.

The President. Let me just say this. One of the most controversial parts of the crime bill, as you know, Mr. Chairman, in the House will be whether we can get the assault weapons ban that passed in the Senate, passed in the House. I just sort of wanted

to ask your opinion as a medical professional. We have a lot of police officers tell us that this is very important, not only because it winds—without doing something on assault weapons you wind up often with the police in effect outgunned by people who have these weapons but that it actually has increased the level of mortality from gunshot wounds because of the transfer from handguns, regular handguns, to assault weapons. Have you seen that?

[*Dr. Statter explained that children die more often than adults from gunshot wounds, regardless of the kind of gun being used.*]

The President. Barbara Schwaegerman is a trauma nurse at Cook County Hospital who works in an emergency room and cares for hundreds of victims of violence every year. Would you like to make a few comments about your experience and what you—[*inaudible*]

[*Ms. Schwaegerman explained how the availability of semiautomatic weapons has created a 350 percent increase in deaths from gunshot wounds. She then stated that young people are using violence rather than communication to solve their problems and disagreements.*]

The President. Thank you.

Perhaps the most important person sitting around this table today on this subject is Carol Ridley, who is an anticrime activist because her 22-year-old son was killed by gunfire in 1992. She is an active member of the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence and the Coalition to Stop Handgun Violence.

Carol.

[*Mrs. Ridley explained that her son was killed by his best friend during an argument. She then discussed the need for community programs and social activities that are structured and will keep children off the streets after school. She also addressed the continuous fear children feel because of violence in their neighborhoods.*]

The President. First of all, let me thank you for being here and thank you for having the courage to keep fighting this.

One of the things that I have seen some success with around the country, that unfortunately is just being done kind of on a case-by-case basis with no consistency, is an effort in our schools to literally teach young people, who may not learn it at home or other community settings, how to resolve their differences, to really try to work through and force kids to come to grips with their aggressions, their angers, and how they deal with this.

You know, I don't know how many encounters I've had in the last 3 years with people talking about shootings occurring in schools that mostly are just impulse things. And it's something I think maybe we ought to give some thought to and make sure that in the crime bill that comes out that some of this money for alternatives includes the ability—these things aren't very expensive—to have these courses in the schools where these kids are actually taught how people, sensible people, resolve their differences, because I think it's a real problem.

[*At this point, a participant agreed that conflict resolution needs to be addressed and discussed how important it is that people have a feeling of hope that something can be done to combat violence and crime.*]

The President. Congressman.

[*Representative Rostenkowski discussed the importance of restricting weapons, reducing violence in the media, and involving the community in combating crime. He then stressed the President's role in anti-assault weapon legislation.*]

The President. Well, I don't think there's any question that, as you said, this has been one of those issues where the people were ahead of those elected officials or at least elected officials as a whole. They've been out there for a long time wanting us to do something.

Mayor.

[*Mayor Daley thanked the President for his leadership in efforts to control violence and crime. He then discussed the effect that violence has on the community as a whole.*]

The President. Thank you.

Anybody else want to say something? Would you stand up and just identify yourself.

[*At this point, eight doctors participating in the program discussed their experiences in treating gunshot victims and suggested ways to prevent violence and crime in the community.*]

The President. Thank you. Is Dr. John May here?

Dr. May. Yes.

The President. You're the senior physician at the Cook County Jail, is that right?

Dr. May. Correct.

The President. I understand that you have done some violence prevention workshops with your people in the prison, in the jail. Would you talk a little about that?

[*Dr. May discussed the violence prevention workshops in the prison and stressed the need for violence prevention methods such as conflict resolution and stricter gun laws.*]

The President. Is Reverend Roosevelt McGee here? Reverend McGee is the executive director of the Chicago chapter of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. What are your observations about what you've heard today, and what can we do to prevent some of these things from happening in the first place? What can I do? What can the rest of us do?

[*Reverend McGee explained community efforts to provide alternatives for people who are turning to a life of crime and violence.*]

The President. Thank you.

[*At this point, Dr. Bruce Gewertz, chairman of surgery at the University of Chicago, thanked the President for his leadership in fighting violence and crime.*]

The President. Thank you. I guess this would be an appropriate time to make an observation that all the medical professionals here will immediately identify with. You know, one of the big debates we're having in Washington over the health care plan now is that Americans spend about 14.5 percent of our total income on health care. The next most health-care-expensive country is Canada where they spend 10 percent; Germany and Japan are slightly under 9 percent of their income, even though their health outcomes, their indicators, are as good or better than ours in almost every major area. And they cover everybody, unlike the United States, which doesn't cover everybody.

And in the health care debate, we're examining, you know, how much of that is due to the way we finance health care, how much of that is due to the enormous administrative burden on hospitals and doctors' clinics and in insurance offices. But if we're going to be perfectly candid, we have to admit that some of the difference is what you all deal with every day. As long as we have more people who are cut up and shot and victims of violence, we're going to have a more expensive health care system than our competitors. And it has enormous economic consequences for the country. The human consequences are by far the most important; I don't want to minimize them. But I think it's important that we acknowledge here that no matter how successful Chairman Rostenkowski and I might be working on this health care thing when we go back, and even if we can get everybody in the world to agree on it, which seems somewhat less than likely, we will still have a system that costs more than all our major competitors as long as we are a more violent society than all our major competitors. Because no matter how you cut it, you will have to be there doing what you do, and that's expensive.

I want to call on just a couple of other people, first, one of your officers. Is Officer Charles Ramsey here?

Officer Charles Ramsey. Here, sir.

The President. Officer Ramsey heads up—he's the deputy chief of police, and he's the head of the community policing program here. Could you say a little bit about what you think is the potential of the community policing program to actually reduce the crime rate and help maybe to begin to change patterns of behavior that we're talking about today?

[*Officer Ramsey stated that law enforcement officials and health care professionals must work together to find methods to prevent violence. He then discussed violence on television and its effect on children.*]

The President. Is Gina Benavides here? Gina was in her car with a girlfriend when she was the victim of random gunfire. And since that time, she's spoken out publicly

against gun violence, and I thought I would give her a chance to say something here today.

[*Ms. Benavides stated that many teachers and police officers do not live in the communities where they work, so their influence is limited.*]

The President. It's a very interesting thing—several weeks ago in Washington, DC, there was a national meeting on violence in which Jesse Jackson and a number of other people were involved. And one of the principal ideas that came out of that, interestingly enough, was that local and State governments should consider giving special tax incentives or low-cost mortgages or something else to encourage police officers and teachers to actually live in the communities in which they work. That's very perceptive that you would say that.

Steven Estrada, are you here? Steven was a former mid-level management professional who was shot in the back and robbed for $9. And I appreciate your coming here, and I was wondering if you'd like to say anything?

Mr. Estrada. It's kind of hard to talk about sometimes, so I don't know what to say. [*Inaudible*]—when you're in a situation like that, you don't know what the answer is. All I know is that I've got to move on. I can't sit here and feel sorry for myself. I've got to move on and pick up where I left off and go on. And so, I don't know, Mr. President, I'm not an expert in handguns like all these other people here today—[*inaudible*]. All I know is one thing, that I do have a family. I have two little girls that I almost lost them, and I'm just grateful to be alive and to be here. So, I'm just going to move on.

The President. Thank you.

Yes sir, Chief.

[*Officer Rodriguez explained that Mr. Estrada, like many victims of violence, is having a difficult time recovering both mentally and physically from his experience.*]

The President. Anything else? Anyone else want to be heard? Young man. Tell us your name.

[*William Waller, a gunshot victim, called for a ban on all weapons and stiffer penalties for criminals.*]

The President. Yes, sir. Thank you, young man.

[*Commander Ronnie Watson discussed the effect of violent television programs and video games on society. He then urged families and community members to become involved in programs that help control violence and crime.*]

The President. Thank you.

Mayor.

[*Mayor Daley stated that many foreign companies are selling drugs and weapons to the United States because they are unable to sell them in their own countries.*]

The President. Thank you. Take one more, and then I think we better wrap up. Then, Congressman, I would like to hear from you at the end.

[*Dr. Leslie Zun, chairman of emergency medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital, explained that the emergency room takes care of many victims of violence at tremendous cost. She then thanked the President for his initiative on health care reform.*]

The President. We also need to remember that every one of these hospitals with a big trauma bill also treats lots of other patients for lots of other things, and it imposes an enormous financial burden on the hospitals, which is one reason this health care reform thing is so important to big city hospitals with large trauma units is that it will help to even out the flow of payments so you will be able to continue to treat these other folks and not risk bankruptcy, which I think is very important. A lot of people have overlooked that connection, that all these other people that are going to these hospitals.

Mr. Chairman, you want to wrap up?

[*Representative Rostenkowski thanked the President for his involvement in this issue and stated that many trauma centers have closed in Chicago due to the high cost of health care. He agreed with the idea that many police officers and teachers should live in the communities where they work. He then*

thanked the President for becoming involved in tough issues.]

The President. It is a tough one, but I want to thank you, Carol, and thank you, Barbara, and thank you, Mindy Statter, and thank you, Chief Rodriguez, and thank all of you for the work you do every day. And I particularly want to thank those of you who have been victimized in some way or another for having the courage to come up here and do this and to continue your interest in this.

I think the American people are ready to move on this. I believe they are. And I think maybe the rest—those of us who can help are getting the message. And your presence here today will certainly help.

Thank you very much. We're adjourned.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:45 a.m. at Wilbur Wright College. In his remarks, he referred to civil rights leader Jesse L. Jackson.

Remarks to Students at Wilbur Wright College in Chicago

February 28, 1994

Thank you. Thank you very much, Chairman Rostenkowski, for that fine introduction. Thank you, Mayor Daley. Thank you, President Le Fevour. It's nice to be back here at Wright Community College. I was here in December of 1992, and I asked the president, I said, ''Now, how many of these people were here back in '92 when I was here?'' And he said, ''Not many. We were in the old place, and we only had 200 people in the room.'' So, I congratulate you on your beautiful new digs here. I like being here in this place.

You know, the city of Chicago and this State have been very good to me, personally, and to our administration. The best thing that Chicago ever did for me was Hillary, who's from here. And yesterday we celebrated our daughter's 14th birthday, the three of us, and we had a wonderful time. I was thinking back over her whole life and looking ahead to what her life might become and to what your life might become and trying to resolve again on that special day to spend every day that I have been given to be your President working on those issues, on the big things that really affect people's lives and their future, not be diverted by the little things that so often swallow up our politics, make us less than we ought to be, and keep us from facing our responsibilities to the future. And that's really what I want to talk to you about today.

I'm honored to be here because I think these community colleges all across our country represent our responsibilities to the future, the chance of people to learn for a lifetime, without regard to their racial or ethnic or income backgrounds, the chance for people to make the most of their lives. I'm glad to be here because I think your mayor is an extraordinary leader who has taken on the tough issues here and tried to do these things.

And I'm glad to be here in Dan Rostenkowski's congressional district because had it not been for his leadership last year, we would not have done the things which were done which have got this economy on the right course and are moving into the future, and we would not be able to do the things that we have to do to meet our obligations to the future in this coming year in health care, welfare reform, and many other areas. So, I am honored to be here, here in this congressional district and here to tell you what you already know: that last year, when I became President, we had a deficit that had quadrupled the national debt, that had quadrupled in 12 years; we had 4 years of very slow job growth; we had very low economic growth; we had low investment. And I determined that we were going to have to make some tough decisions that would not be popular in the short run, decisions for which we would be attacked and decisions which would be misrepresented to the American people, to get an economic implant in place that would reverse the track we were on, that would begin to bring down the deficit, that would bring down interest rates, keep inflation down, and get investment and jobs and growth up. And I proposed that economic plan to the Congress, and in spite of the fact that there were billions of dollars of spending cuts in it and the taxes all went to reduce the deficit and only the top 1.2 percent of the American people paid higher income taxes—16.5 percent of the people, as they'll find out on April 15th, got a tax cut, lower income working people who deserve it be-