

Week Ending Friday, January 17, 1997

**Message on the Observance of
Ramadan**

January 10, 1997

Warm greetings to all those celebrating the sacred month of Ramadan.

Each year during Ramadan, Muslims across America and around the world commemorate God's revelation of the Koran to Muhammad with a month of rigorous fasting and devout prayer. This period of discipline for body, mind, and spirit draws the Muslim community closer not only to God, but also to their fellow human beings.

By experiencing hunger during Ramadan, the followers of Muhammad learn true compassion for the poor of the world who go hungry every day. By reflecting on God's teachings in the Koran, they learn humility and the beauty of forgiveness. And, by their example of devotion and self-discipline during Ramadan, Muslims remind us all that our true strength is derived, not from food and drink, but from closeness to God.

As the crescent moon marks the beginning of Ramadan again this year, Hillary and I extend our best wishes for a holy and memorable observance.

Bill Clinton

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on January 11.

The President's Radio Address

January 11, 1997

Good morning. Today I want to talk about how to build upon the progress we've made together in working against crime and violence, and especially how we can fight against youth crime.

Four years ago it seemed to many Americans as if the forces of crime and violence had gained an intractable hold over our country, and law-abiding Americans were afraid that from now on they would just have to

put up with the insecurity and loss that goes with rampant crime. I was determined to turn that around, to give people the tools they need to take back their streets and schools and neighborhoods, to reestablish a sense of security and true freedom in our country, and to restore our people's faith in the power of law and order.

We had a comprehensive plan to fight crime, to put 100,000 new community police officers on the street and tough new penalties on the books, to keep guns away from criminals by passing the Brady bill and banning assault weapons, to steer young people away from crime, gangs, and drugs in the first place. This approach is working.

This week the FBI reported that serious crime dropped another 3 percent last year, dropping for the 5th year in a row, the longest decline in more than 25 years. This is great news, not because it gives us a chance to sit back and rest on our laurels but because it does show all of us that if we work together we can make a difference.

Now that we've finally turned the crime on the run, we have to redouble our efforts. We have to drive the forces of violence further and further into retreat. And as we move forward, we have to remember that we're not just fighting against crime, we're fighting for the kind of nation we want to build together for the 21st century, for an America where people feel safe when they walk around the block at night and untroubled when they kiss their children goodbye in the morning, an America where nobody's grandmother lives across the street from a crackhouse and nobody's child walks to school through a neighborhood overrun by gangs. We're fighting for our children and for their future.

As I begin my second term as President, the next stage in our fight must center on keeping our children safe and attacking the scourge of juvenile crime and gangs. I want every police officer, prosecutor, and citizen in America working together to keep our

young people safe and young criminals off the streets. This should be America's top priority in the fight for law and order over the next 4 years. I pledge it will be mine.

We must help parents protect their children and bring order and discipline to their lives. That's why I support school uniforms and community-based curfews. That's why we made zero tolerance for guns in schools the law of the land and passed Megan's Law to demand that States tell a community whenever a dangerous sexual predator enters its midst. Now we must do more to give young people something to say yes to, after school, on weekends, and in the summer. And we must finish the job of putting 100,000 police on our streets.

At the same time, young people must understand that if they break the law, they will be punished, and if they commit violent crimes, they will be punished severely. I am determined to break the backs of criminal gangs that have ruined too many lives and stolen too many futures by bringing the full force of the law against them.

One of the most difficult problems facing law enforcement in this fight is the power of gang members to thwart the criminal justice system by threatening and intimidating the witnesses against them. Too many people in too many communities will not testify about gang crimes because they are afraid of violent reprisal. We must not allow the voice of justice to be frightened into silence by the violent threats of gangs.

Today the Justice Department is releasing a report called "Preventing Gang And Drug-Related Witness Intimidation." This report is a handbook for police officers, prosecutors, and judges, to help them overcome the dangerous obstacle witness intimidation poses to the steady march of justice. It details the problems they face and helps to provide a blueprint for them to follow that will significantly help State and local gang investigation and prosecution. Starting today, the Justice Department will distribute this report to thousands of police departments, prosecutors, and judges across America.

In the coming weeks, I will submit to Congress comprehensive legislation to combat youth violence and drug abuse. Together with all our other efforts against youth vio-

lence, this will be the top crime fighting priority of my second term. I've asked the Attorney General to closely examine the growing threat of witness intimidation by gangs and to recommend strong measures to stop it that can be included in this legislation. We must not allow the very gangs we're fighting to grind the wheels of justice to a halt.

Over the past 4 years we've shown that we can roll back crime and violence. Now is no time to let up. There is still too much of it. But if we continue to work together, to stand up for what is right, to work with our community police officers, to take responsibility for ourselves and our families and the other children in our communities who need a guiding hand and an encouraging word, if we'll do all these things, we can keep the crime rate coming down and we can build the future our children deserve.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:55 p.m. on January 10 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on January 11.

Remarks on Presenting the Congressional Medal of Honor to African-American Heroes of World War II

January 13, 1997

The President. Secretary Perry, Secretary Brown, other members of the administration, General Shalikashvili and the members of the Joint Chiefs, General Powell, Senator Craig, Senator Kempthorne, Congressman Miller, the members of the families and friends of the medal recipients, and Mr. Vernon Baker. I'd like to begin by thanking Shaw University; its president, Talbert Shaw; and all the authors of the Shaw study on the nomination of outstanding African-American soldiers for the Medal of Honor in the United States Army during World War II.

I also want to commend the Department of the Army officials, former and present, who commissioned this study and saw it through. Together, your support and painstaking research made this day possible. Without it, we would not be able to meet our obligation as a people to an extraordinary group of soldiers to whom we owe the great-