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those who gave their lives to protect the values that give meaning to our lives. I ask you also to think of our men and women in uniform who are risking their lives in the skies over Serbia, so that our children may inhabit a world where people are not murdered and driven from their homes because of their faith or their heritage.

As our Armed Forces and our Allies strive to build peace in the Balkans, and in other places far from America's shores, let us all join in thanking them for all they do every day to defend our freedom.

NOTE: The President's remarks were recorded at 5:31 p.m. on May 30 at the White Oak Plantation in Yulee, FL, for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 31, but due to technical difficulties the audio version of this radio actuality was not made available.

Remarks Announcing a Study on Youth Violence and Media Marketing

June 1, 1999

Give him another hand. He was great, Bravo. [*Applause*] Thank you.

When I was listening to Arthur speak, I didn't know whether to offer him a job as a White House speechwriter—[*laughter*]—or just wait for the opportunity to vote for him someday. Let me say thank you very much. [*Applause*] Thank you.

And we thank your mother for bringing you here, and congratulations. And Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, thank you, and Pam Eakes, founder of Mothers Against Violence in America, thank you.

I thank the Attorney General and Chairman Pitofsky for their remarks and their commitment. I thank Mayor Corradini, Mayor Kaine, County Executive Curry, and County Executive Dutch Ruppersberger for the interest that our local government leaders have. I thank Representative Sheila Jackson Lee for her passionate commitment to this issue. And all of you, welcome to the White House.

And most of all, I want to say again how much I appreciate Arthur Sawe for coming here, and for sharing a child's perspective. We have other children in this audience today, and we are really here about them and their future.

As Hillary said, the tragedy at Littleton had a profound effect on America. It certainly had a profound effect on us and on our family, particularly after we had the chance to go to Colorado and visit with the families of the children who were killed and many of the young children who are still grievously wounded and the kids at the school with them, who are hurting still, and the teachers.

I do think that what Hillary said is right: We sense a determination, not only in that community but throughout our country, not just to grieve about this but to do something about it. The national grassroots campaign against violence against children is rooted in our faith that we can do better.

We know we can prevent more youth violence if we work together, across all the lines that divide us. We know we can do it if we're all willing to assume responsibility and stop trying to assign blame. Of course, the responsibility begins at home. It must be reinforced and supported at schools and houses of worship in the community as a whole. Those of us in public service must also do our part. There is broad and growing consensus for us to do more.

Let me say I am also very grateful that the gun manufacturers came here last month and voiced their support for commonsense restrictions to make it more difficult for guns to get into the hands of children and criminals. I'm encouraged that the Senate acted to close the deadly gun show loophole, to require safety locks to be sold with every handgun, to ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips, and ban violent juveniles from owning guns as adults. I hope the House of Representatives will pass these commonsense measures as soon as they return from the Memorial Day recess. We have a lot to do this year, but this should be put at the top of the agenda and not put on hold.

As you have already heard, members of the entertainment industry must also do their part. They and the rest of us cannot kid ourselves. Our children are being fed a dependable daily dose of violence, and it sells. Now,

30 years of studies have shown that this desensitizes our children to violence and to the consequences of it.

We now know that by the time the typical American child reaches the age of 18, he or she has seen 200,000 dramatized acts of violence and 40,000 dramatized murders. Kids become attracted to it and more numb to its consequences. As their exposure to violence grows, so, in some deeply troubling cases of particularly vulnerable children, does the taste for it. We should not be surprised that half the video games a typical seventh grader plays are violent.

Anyone who doubts the impact of the cultural assault can look at what now, over 30 years, amounts to somewhere over 300 studies, all of whom show that there is a link between sustained exposure, hour after hour, day after day, week after week, year after year, to violent entertainment and violent behavior.

What the studies say, quite simply, is that the boundary between fantasy and reality violence, which is a clear line for most adults, can become very blurred for vulnerable children. Kids steeped in the culture of violence do become desensitized to it and more capable of committing it themselves.

That is why I have strongly urged people in the entertainment industry to consider the consequences of what they create and how they advertise it. One can value the first amendment right to free speech and at the same time care for and act with restraint. Our administration has worked to give parents more tools to protect their kids, to block violent programming from entering their living room with the V-chip and the rating system. We've made progress on parental screening for Internet and ratings for Internet game sites.

Still, when violent entertainment made for adults is marketed to children, it undermines the rating system designed to protect them. And if you look at some of these ads, it's hard to argue with a straight face that the games were made for adults in the first place, like the one Arthur mentioned.

Advertisements have a particular role here. They have the power to egg children on and lure them in. Every parent knows what response a commercial for sugar cereal or the latest ''Star Wars'' toy will get from their children. People advertise because it works. They want that product, and one way or the other, they're determined to get it. So we ought to think twice about the impact of ads for so-called ''first-person shooter video games,'' like the recent ad for a game that invites players to, and I quote, ''Get in touch with your gun-toting, cold-blooded murdering side.''

I was given—today Arthur brought me the magazine with the ad that he mentioned, and he was kind enough to mark it for me. There really is a gun here. It says, ''More fun than shooting your neighbor's cat.'' I was given another ad that says, ''What kind of psycho drives a school bus into a war zone?'' And here's a school bus, heavily armed. This came out right after the incident in Springfield, Oregon.

Here's an ad that turns the argument I just made on its head: ''Psychiatrists say it's important to feel something when you kill.'' And then it goes on to say, ''You ought to get this technology because it bumps, and you feel it.'' It says, ''Every sensation, every vibration, every mutilation, nine programmable weapons buttons. Customizable feedback software. Push the stick that pushes back, and feel your pain.'' And here's one that's the most unbelievable of all. It says, ''Kill your friends guilt-free.''

Now, obviously, Arthur has the inner strength and the good upbringing to reject that kind of violent appeal. Most of our children do, but not all of our children do. We cannot be surprised when this kind of thing has an impact on our most vulnerable children. Is it 100 percent to blame? No. It's easier to get guns in this society. Parents on average spend 22 hours a week less with their children than they did 30 years ago because of the demands of work and commuting, the busyness of daily life.

But when you put it all together, there are bound to be explosive negative consequences. That's why today I am asking the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to study the extent to which the video game, music, and movie markets do actually market violence to children, and whether those industries are abiding by their own voluntary systems of regulations.