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Nairobi and Dar es Salaam are recent examples of such bombings, and no country or region is exempt from the human tragedy and immense costs that result from such criminal acts. Although the penal codes of most states contain provisions proscribing these kinds of attacks, this Convention provides, for the first time, an international framework for cooperation among states directed toward prevention of such incidents and ensuing punishment of offenders, wherever found.

In essence, the Convention imposes binding legal obligations upon States Parties either to submit for prosecution or to extradite any person within their jurisdiction who commits an offense as defined in Article 2, attempts to commit such an act, participates as an accomplice, organizes or directs others to commit such an offense, or in any other way contributes to the commission of an offense by a group of persons acting with a common purpose. A State Party is subject to these obligations without regard to the place where the alleged act covered by Article 2 took place.

Article 2 of the Convention declares that any person commits an offense within the meaning of the Convention if that person unlawfully and intentionally delivers, places, discharges or detonates an explosive or other lethal device in, into or against a place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, or an infrastructure facility, with the intent (a) to cause death or serious bodily injury or (b) cause extensive destruction of such a place, facility or system, where such destruction results in or is likely to result in major economic loss. States Parties to the Convention will also be obligated to provide one another legal assistance in investigations or criminal or extradition proceedings brought in respect of the offenses set forth in Article 2.

The recommended legislation necessary to implement the Convention will be submitted to the Congress separately.

This Convention is a vitally important new element in the campaign against the scourge of international terrorism. I hope that all states will become Parties to this Convention, and that it will be applied universally. I recommend, therefore, that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to this Convention, subject to the understandings and reservation that are described in the accompanying State Department report.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
September 8, 1999.

Remarks on Anticrime Legislative Priorities

September 9, 1999

Thank you very much, Mayor Webb, for your words and your work and your friendship. Thank you, Commissioner Timoney, for the example that you and so many others in law enforcement set. I want to thank all the mayors here today. There's really quite an amazing array of our Nation's chief executives of our cities, and Republicans and Democrats alike. Thank you all for coming.

I thank the county officials who are here, the police chiefs and others in law enforcement who are here, and those of you who are here supporting them from the National Council of Churches and other groups.

I want to thank Attorney General Reno and Secretary Summers and Secretary Cuomo, Deputy Attorney General Holder, Treasury Under Secretary for Enforcement Jim Johnson. They are some of the team and the heart of the team that we have had working at this crime issue now for 6½ years. And any success that our administration has enjoyed, I think belongs in large measure to them as well as to the remarkable partnership that we have enjoyed with all of you, and I thank them for that.

There have already been a couple of references made to the fact that many of you were with me here in the White House way back in January of 1994 when I asked you to walk a beat in the Halls of Congress to put more police on the street, to ban assault weapons, to keep guns out of the hands of those who shouldn't have them, to fund local prevention programs, to help keep our kids out of trouble in the first place even as we have tougher punishment for serious, violent crimes.

At the time, I think most people in this country assumed that the crime rate would

go up forever and that nothing could be done to bring it down substantially. But I didn't believe that, because I had seen from neighborhoods in Los Angeles to the street I walked with Mayor Rendell in Philadelphia and—to many other places that I have been with many of you from late 1991 through 1993 that the crime rate was already going down in places where people had done what makes sense to reconnect police officers to their communities and to take sensible preventive measures.

Well, with a lot of effort, a lot of blood on the floor and the sacrifice—I think we should never forget the sacrifice of some Members' seats in the United States Congress—we did pass the 1994 crime bill. A lot of people used that passage to go home in 1994 and then try to terrify the voters that we were going to take away all their hunting and sporting rights. And others said it was a great waste of money, that it would never lower the crime rate. Others said there would never be any police put on the street. I heard it all.

But thanks to the mayors, the law enforcement chiefs, the county officials, and others involved in trying to make our streets safer, this strategy has worked beyond all expectations: the lowest murder rate in 30 years, the lowest overall crime rate in 26 years, violent crime down by 27 percent in the last 6 years nationwide. And in many smaller ways, crimes like vandalism that undermine our quality of life have also dropped dramatically.

I know that one reason this has happened is that we have enjoyed the longest peacetime expansion in our history, and we have 19.4 million new jobs. But every single serious analysis of this phenomenon has also shown that a major portion of the credit belongs to sensible law enforcement and prevention strategies and especially to the strategy of community policing and day-to-day involvement in the communities.

I see Mayor Menino from Boston here. Many of you know that Boston went virtually 2 years without any young person being killed in a violent act. You cannot explain those kind of results, which we have seen in the neighborhoods of every person represented in this audience, simply by economic improvement. We now know what works, and more and more mayors and law enforcement officials and other local officials are doing what works. All we've tried to do is to give you the tools to do it.

We've now funded, ahead of schedule and under budget, the 100,000 community police officers promised in the 1994 crime bill. Working together, we have created, I believe, all across the country, across party lines and jurisdictional lines, a new consensus on how to fight crime and violence, on what works. But, as Mayor Webb said, we have been reminded in recent months from Los Angeles to Littleton to Atlanta to what happened in Illinois and Indiana, gun violence is still too much a part of America's life.

We've learned a lot about it and what it takes to reduce it in the last 6 years, and we know that we need to do some more things. But once again, just as I asked you 6 years ago, you have to walk a beat in Congress if you want the results. We have to send the message that out in America, this is not a partisan issue; this is simply a commonsense issue about what does and doesn't work. Mayors and police chiefs, Republicans and Democrats all work on the frontlines. They know the cost of inaction; they know the benefits of prudent action.

You also know that the Federal Government needs to be a partner in giving you the tools to do your jobs. Today the Justice Department will take another step in that direction by releasing $146 million in grants to hundreds of law enforcement agencies across our country to hire nearly 1,600 more police officers, including over 750 who will walk a new beat, the halls of our schools, to protect our children.

I am also pleased that the Department of Housing and Urban Development will invest $15 million to help public housing agencies, working with the police, to get guns off the street through gun buy-back programs.

A lot of you have already invested in efforts like these where citizens can exchange their guns for food or clothing or small sums of cash. They have been successfully pioneered at the local level. I just want the Federal Government to lend a hand to do more.

We know that too many neighborhoods still are awash in guns, and that's not just through crime—that is just not through

crime that guns lead to tragedy. You heard Mayor Webb mention the tragic case in Gary, Indiana. Listen to this: The rate of accidental shooting deaths for children under 15 in the United States is 9 times higher than the rate for the other 25 industrialized nations combined. If any of you have or ever had a child in those wonderful, glowing years, that makes a lasting impression. I'm going to say it one more time. The rate of accidental shooting deaths for children under 15 in the United States is 9 times higher than the rate of the other 25 industrialized nations combined. Every gun turned in through a buy-back program means, potentially, one less tragedy. And there's more we can do to help you as well.

As all of you know, in the balanced budget, I proposed funding through our COPS program that would allow us to put another 30–50,000 police on the street in the neighborhoods that still have very high crime rates, to concentrate more resources where they're most needed.

You are doing your part; now it's time for Congress to do its part. Unfortunately, there is the chance that it will go in the other direction. The budget approved by the Republican leaders would cut our successful COPS program policing in half, really by more than half.

First, they said it wouldn't work in '94, and it was a colossal waste of money. Now that it has worked and it's made the streets safer, they still want to cut it. The tax plan that the leadership is supporting would threaten law enforcement across the board. It would force reduction in the numbers of Federal agents that work with your local officials. It would cut deeply into our support for State and local law enforcement.

To make matters worse, Congress has yet to pass a commonsense juvenile crime bill to prevent youth violence and keep guns out of the wrong hands. It's been over a month now since the House and the Senate conferees met, nearly 5 months since the shootings at Columbine. America is still waiting for Congress to act. It shouldn't take another tragedy to make this a priority, though we've had plenty of them in the last 5 months.

Now, the lawmakers are back in town. It would be unconscionable if they were to leave again without sending me a balanced bipartisan juvenile crime bill that closes the gun show loophole, I mean, really closes the gun show loophole, requires child safety locks on guns, and bans the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips.

We need legislation that will strengthen our present laws, not weaken them. We need legislation that applies to all gun shows, not a bill that allows criminals to turn flea markets and parking lots into open-air gun bazaars. And we need legislation that strengthens, not weakens, the Brady background checks.

These Brady checks are working. They've stopped over 410,000 felons, fugitives, and other prohibited persons from buying guns since 1993 when the Brady bill became law. In just the last 7 months, since our new instant criminal background check system went into effect, 100,000 illegal purchases have been stopped by the insta-check system. Today the Justice and Treasury Departments are releasing reports analyzing the effectiveness of the instant check system.

The report makes two things very clear. First, the system does provide law enforcement with a powerful new crime-fighting tool while causing little inconvenience for law-abiding gun purchasers. Listen to this: Seventy-three percent of the checks are completed within minutes, 95 percent in 2 hours or less. That's the good news. But second, the report also makes clear that it is critically important to give law enforcement sufficient time to thoroughly check records. In fact, less than 5 percent of background checks take longer than 24 hours. But those purchasers, whose checks who do take longer than 24 hours, are almost 20 times more likely to be convicted felons or otherwise prohibited from owning firearms.

Now, what does that mean? It means Congress did a good thing in pushing the instant check system. That's a good thing, and all of us should acknowledge that. It's a good thing. Anything that minimizes inconvenience to law-abiding people is a good thing. But it also means that our law enforcement officials should not be artificially required to get all this done within a window of time that is so small and that would inconvenience only 5 percent of the people by going more

than a day who, themselves, are 20 times more likely to be prohibited from making purchases in the first place. So everybody, I think, will take heart from the results of this study. They will see that the instant check system is a good thing. And that is good.

But I would also hope that everyone will take heart from the sobering fact that the 5 percent that take longer than a day are 20 times more likely to be prohibited purchasers and not unduly tie the hands of our law enforcement officials who do this work. So let me be blunt. The NRA was right to support the instant check system; they're wrong when they try to tie the hands of the law enforcement officials to look at the last 5 percent, and I would hope the Congress would do that.

In the next few weeks, this juvenile crime bill is but one of an enormous number of opportunities Congress will have, thanks to our present prosperity, to pull our country together and to move our country forward. We have an historic opportunity to lift the burden of debt off the next generation. We can literally not only continue to pay down the debt, but America, in 15 years, if we stay on the present path, could be debt-free for the first time since 1835. That would guarantee a whole generation of low interest rates and prosperity.

We have an opportunity to strengthen Social Security and take it out beyond the lifespan of the baby boom generation, to strengthen Medicare and reform it with prescription drug coverage. We have an opportunity to invest in our children's future with world-class schools and safer streets. The tax plan passed by the Republican leadership would not permit these priorities to be pursued. We could never pay off the debt; it doesn't add a day to the life of the Social Security or the Medicare Trust Funds; it doesn't provide for prescription drug coverage and would require cuts in education and law enforcement. The cuts in education and law enforcement could be up to 50 percent.

Now, in 1994, because we worked together, we passed the crime bill that enables us to come here and celebrate today, to enable every mayor to sit here and say, "I wish the President were telling this story about my hometown. There is this thing I wish was mentioned today." And back home, people are celebrating, and no one asks you when you're a victim of a crime whether you're a Republican or a Democrat.

And once a person gets elected, when the mayor walks down the street and we're talking about saving lives, no one cares what your party is; they just want people to be safe. We've come a long way since 1994 with a simple strategy—more police, fewer guns in the wrong hands. We don't want to adopt laws and budgets which would give us the reverse—fewer police and more guns in the wrong hands. No one in America wants that to happen. And there is, today, a bipartisan majority in the Congress that does not want that to happen.

So, again, I implore the leadership of the Congress to work with us, to give us safer streets and a brighter future. In 1994 we were having a discussion, a debate based on what we thought would work, based on a year or 2 of experience in a few places. In 1999 there is no reasonable debate. We now have 6 years of what works. We have proven avalanches of indisputable evidence about what it takes to have safe streets and safe futures for our children. It is an American issue beyond the confines of the Capital City, and it should become America's cause as Congress returns to work.

Thank you, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:11 a.m. in Presidential Hall (formerly Room 450) in the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Mayor Wellington E. Webb of Denver, CO; Police Commissioner John Timoney and Mayor Edward Rendell of Philadelphia, PA; and Mayor Thomas M. Menino of Boston, MA.

Remarks on Departure for New Zealand and an Exchange With Reporters

September 9. 1999

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit/East Timor

The President. Good afternoon. Before I leave on my trip for New Zealand, I wanted to say a few words about the trip and a couple