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Crime - Gun Prosecution Directive

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directive

**President Clinton: Deterring and Reducing Gun Crime
March 20, 1999**

In his weekly radio address, President Clinton will direct the Secretary of the Treasury and Attorney General to develop a national strategy to increase gun prosecutions and further reduce gun violence through efforts like Richmond, Virginia's Project Exile. The strategy will also call for: expanded efforts to identify illegal gun markets and gun "hot spots"; improved coordination with state and local law enforcement; closer supervision of gun criminals on parole or probation; and innovative, community-based efforts to reduce gun violence. The President also will release a new Justice Department report highlighting 60 promising strategies that have helped reduce gun violence throughout the country.

Since 1993, the nation's crime rate has dropped by more than 20 percent, to its lowest level in a generation. During this period, gun-related crime has dropped even more: gun murders are down by 33 percent, and crimes committed with firearms are down by 27 percent. But gun-related crime and violence remain serious problems. In 1997, about 14,000 persons were murdered by guns.

Prosecuting More Gun Criminals. To continue to reduce gun crime and violence, President Clinton will direct the Secretary of the Treasury and Attorney General -- working with U.S. Attorneys, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), other federal law enforcement, and state and local law enforcement -- to develop a comprehensive national strategy to investigate and prosecute more gun criminals.

Project Exile. The President will call for the expansion of programs like Project Exile in Richmond, VA. Under Project Exile, the Richmond U.S. Attorney -- working closely with other state, local, and federal law enforcement authorities -- targets gun-carrying felons and other armed criminals for immediate federal prosecution and stiff mandatory sentences in federal prison. Hundreds of guns have been seized and hundreds of gun criminals convicted. As a result of Project Exile and other efforts, gun-related homicides dropped by more than 40 percent last year.

"An illegal gun will get you 5 years in federal prison." As part of Project Exile, law enforcement authorities also launched an extensive media campaign to get a simple message across to Richmond's gun criminals: "An illegal gun will get you 5 years in federal prison." This message was advertised on billboards throughout the city, city buses, and radio and television promotional spots. Criminals in Richmond now routinely testify that they did not carry a firearm because of their knowledge of the stiff federal penalties.

Boston Gun Project/Operation Ceasefire. The President will also call for

federal officials to expand efforts like the Boston Gun Project/Operation Ceasefire to enhance firearms prosecutions and attack the illegal supply of guns. By tracing all guns recovered at crime scenes to their source, the ATF and Boston Police Department identify illegal gun traffickers, target law enforcement efforts on these criminals, and refer cases involving them for swift prosecution by federal and state prosecutors. As a result of these and other violence prevention efforts, homicides in Boston have dropped more than 60 percent since 1995.

Building on Proven Approaches. To help all communities further reduce gun violence, the President's directive also calls for the national strategy developed by the Treasury and Justice Departments to incorporate the following elements:

- expanded comprehensive crime gun tracing, analysis, and mapping; increased use of ballistics identification technology; and coordinated use of crime gun information to identify illegal gun markets, gun "hot spots," and illegal gun traffickers;
- strengthened regulatory and law enforcement efforts to ensure compliance with applicable laws by federally-licensed dealers and prospective gun sellers and purchasers;
- targeted deterrence of violent offenders through improved coordination with probation and parole officials supervising such offenders and swift and certain punishment for those found to have violated the conditions of their parole or probation; and
- increased emphasis on working closely with community members to identify gun criminals, search for and seize crime guns, and increase knowledge of gun-related crime and violence problems.

The President also will announce the release of a new Justice Department report -- *Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence*. Designed as a "toolbox" for communities, the report details 60 successful community strategies to reduce gun violence. The report will be distributed to communities throughout the country next week.

New Resources for Firearms Enforcement. The President's FY 2000 budget includes new resources to help implement the national strategy called for today. In particular, his budget includes:

- §5 million for more than 40 additional federal prosecutors to conduct intensive firearms prosecution projects targeting the illegal gun market, armed drug traffickers, and violent felons who possess guns;

\$23.8 million for more than 120 new ATF agents to support firearms investigations, arrest violent criminals and gun traffickers, and crack down on illegal gun sales; and

\$1.3 billion for a 21st Century Policing Initiative to help communities hire more police and prosecutors, and to allow them to target gun crime and other public safety priorities.

In contrast, the Republicans' proposed budget would either cut the President's request for the 21st Century Policing Initiative by more than \$1 billion dollars, or reduce other law enforcement spending by an average of 6 percent.

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PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON

RADIO ADDRESS ON GUN DIRECTIVE

THE WHITE HOUSE

MARCH 20, 1999

Good Morning. Today I want to talk to you about the next important steps we can take to rid our streets of gun violence and to make America's communities even safer for our families. I am very proud to be joined in the Oval Office by Attorney General Janet Reno, Treasury Under Secretary Jim Johnson, ATF Director John Magaw, Police Chiefs Jerry Oliver and Robert Olson, as well as four of our U.S. Attorneys who are leading this fight all across America.

Over the past six years, we have worked hard to fight crime -- putting in place a strategy of more prevention, stricter enforcement and tougher punishment.

We've made it possible for 11,000 communities to put more than 92,000 new police officers on the beat; taken more criminals and deadly assault weapons off the street, and with Brady background checks, stopped more than a quarter of a million handguns from falling into the hands of convicted felons and other prohibited persons.

As a result, the crime rate has dropped by more than 20 percent -- to the lowest level in a generation. Gun crimes have declined by more than a quarter. Gun murders have fallen by a third. Slowly, but surely, neighborhoods once abandoned to the crack of gunfire and the wail of ambulance sirens are coming alive with the sounds of children playing freely in the streets.

This is indeed encouraging news. But we must do more. In 1997, 14,000 people were murdered by guns. While the numbers are declining, any child caught in the crossfire of a gang shootout, or a police officer struck down by a criminal's bullet, or a store clerk murdered in a robbery is one tragedy too many.

That is why today I am directing Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin and Attorney General Reno to use every available tool to increase the prosecution of gun criminals and shut down illegal gun markets. I am asking them to work closely with local, state and federal law enforcement officials -- and to report back to me with a plan to reduce gun violence by applying proven local strategies to fight gun crime nationwide.

Look at what federal prosecutors and ATF are doing in Richmond, Virginia, in an effort they call “Project Exile.” Under the leadership of U.S. Attorney Helen Fahey, Project Exile has used the threat of tough federal statutes -- statutes that require stiff sentences and deny bail to offenders -- to reduce gun crime and take serious gun criminals off the street. And gun murders are down by a remarkable 41 percent.

My balanced budget will help hire more federal prosecutors and ATF agents so we can crack down on even more gun criminals and illegal gun trafficking across the country.

After six years of hard work, America is winning the war against crime. But we can't declare victory yet. We must keep even more guns from falling into the wrong hands by requiring background checks at gun shows and banning violent juvenile offenders from owning guns for life. And I ask you to support our 21st Century Policing Initiative to give law enforcement the manpower, the high-tech tools, and prevention strategies they need to keep us safe.

Unfortunately, Republicans in Congress have proposed a budget that would dramatically cut back our investment in community policing. That would be a big mistake.

We must move forward in our fight for safer streets and safer families. Over the years, the proliferation of guns in our streets -- of criminals packing pistols instead of switchblades -- have made crime deadlier than ever. Guns have magnified the malevolence of crime. That is why disarming criminals has been and must continue to be a top crime-fighting priority. Let none of us rest until every American is safe from gun violence. Thanks for listening.