

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Congressional Black Caucus

June 25, 1991

Q. Mr. President, are you going to lift South African sanctions soon?

The President. We're not taking any questions at what is known as a photo opportunity.

I will say, I'm glad to have the Black Caucus here. We have had differences on some issues. I don't think we have differences in terms of questioning each other's motives, and I think on this question I want to hear from them. And then I want to tell them how I see the law, which was written by the Congress, and how I would interpret the law, which I—under which I don't have much flexibility. But I'm anxious to hear from these leaders as to their view on that very important issue, and their—I'll be very frank with them in giving them my views.

This is not the first meeting of the Black Caucus, nor will it be the last, as far as I'm concerned. I think it's a good thing to have these kind of discussions, and I appreciate your comments on that from

time to time. Ed requested the meeting, and I'm glad you all are here.

So, there's an answer to your question—which I will take no more, which I will take no more.

Q. Are you also going to discuss the civil rights bill?

The President. —the agenda is wide open. And I want to hear from them on a wide array of questions. You see Mr. Rangel here; I expect it won't be confined to any two categories, knowing of his fascination and leadership in the field of antinarcotics. So, it's an open agenda. Education. We'll talk about anything that's on the minds of these leaders of the Congress and members of the Black Caucus.

Note: The exchange began at 10:05 a.m. in the Cabinet Room at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to Representatives Edolphus Towns and Charles Rangel.

Remarks at a Luncheon Meeting With Law Enforcement Officials

June 25, 1991

Well, let me just say it's a pleasure to be here with the heads of all our Federal law enforcement agencies. We'll be taking a little lunch, talking over the issues of concern to the various departments.

But let me just say a word about our crime bill. By now, certainly all of you are familiar with this 100-day challenge that I threw down to the Congress to act on the bill. That was now 106 days ago. And we sent our comprehensive crime bill up to the Congress 106 days ago, and the Senate started debating provisions of the legislation just last Thursday. The House has given absolutely no indication that they plan to act soon.

Our bill, in my view, would help fight violent crime, assist our law enforcement

officials by relieving many of the frustrations of the current system. There will be no more delays, no more abuse of the system through habeas corpus petitions. It has penalties for those who use a firearm in the commission of a crime. They're the ones we ought to go after.

We also propose reforming the exclusionary rule to permit the admission of evidence that has been seized in good faith. And a meaningful Federal death penalty—everyone's familiar with that and our position on that.

But my view is, the American people simply are tired of watching hoodlums walk, of seeing criminals mock our justice system with these endless technicalities. They want to bring order to the streets that

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are shaken by chaos and crime—the people do. And yet, for more than 2 years Congress has failed to act on our proposals—good, solid proposals—to fight crime and to strengthen the rule of law.

So, we've got to wait and see what the final product will look like. I'm simply not going to sign just any bill, just call it an anticrime bill. And I will not sign any bill, frankly, that handcuffs our law enforcement people, our police, and that demoralizes the law enforcement community.

Now we just got word, however, this morning—another disappointment, I might say—but the Senate declined to adopt our exclusionary rule provision. Our proposal would have extended what they call a good faith exception of the exclusionary rule to warrant searches. This means that the evidence of serious crimes will be excluded at trial now because the officer did not have a warrant, even where the officer believes in good faith that no warrant was necessary.

So, as troubling as this is, what is worse is that the Biden exclusionary rule proposal

remains in the bill. And although Senator Biden attempted to codify current case law, our view is that his language would actually make it harder to get evidence admitted as it does current law.

So, I hope the Senate will take a new look at these provisions. I hope that Congress or the House side of that Congress will act, and I can guarantee all of you who are giving a lot of your lives—and your people are—to law enforcement that the American people are with us in this; they want these things done. And I'm having great difficulty getting it through the Congress, so I hope the American people will speak up and let the Congress know that this kind of strong anticrime legislation has their support. We need some action.

It's a pleasure.

Note: The President spoke at 12:14 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Meeting With Secretary General Manfred Woerner of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

June 25, 1991

The President met with NATO Secretary General Manfred Woerner in the Oval Office for approximately 30 minutes this afternoon. Secretary General Woerner and the President reviewed the progress NATO has made in the transition of the alliance as mandated by the NATO leaders at the July 1990 NATO summit. In particular, they focused on the success of the recent Defense Planning Committee Ministerial and the North Atlantic Council Ministerial meeting. Secretary General Woerner and the Presi-

dent also discussed arrangements for the November NATO summit in Rome, which they view as the culmination of the work mandated in London. Both of them agreed on the vitality and the relevancy of NATO to meet future challenges in Europe. The President also reiterated the United States strong support for the development of a European security identity that strengthens the NATO alliance.