

The President's Radio Address *April 16, 1994*

Good morning. This week we joined in sorrow for those who lost their lives in the downing of two of our helicopters over Iraq. I want to begin by expressing, again, my condolences to the loved ones of those who died. They gave their lives in a high cause, providing comfort to Kurdish victims of Saddam Hussein's brutal regime, and we honor the sacrifice of those brave individuals.

Today I want to talk about one of the greatest threats we face right here at home: the threat of crime in our communities. In 1991, I visited the Rockwell Gardens in the ABLA housing projects in Chicago where I saw firsthand what happens to our children who live too long in the shadow of fear. Dozens of children rushed out to greet me, eager to have someone to tell their stories to. They talked of gunshots and drug dealers, of late-night knocks at their doors and hallways where they dared not stray. Many of their stories had a common theme: their childhoods were being stolen from them.

Vince Lane, the head of the Chicago Housing Authority, is a genuine hero to these children. He's trying to show the children that someone cares. To help, he put into effect a search-and-sweep policy to clean out Chicago's public housing communities, to find weapons, to get people out of those housing projects who didn't belong, to find drugs. But just over a week ago a Federal district judge declared Vince Lane's search-and-sweep policy unconstitutional.

Every law-abiding American, rich or poor, has the right to raise children without the fear of criminals terrorizing where they live. That's why, as soon as I heard about the court's decision, I instructed Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros and Attorney General Janet Reno to devise a constitutional, effective way to protect the residents of America's public housing communities. Secretary Cisneros and Attorney General Reno moved quickly. Today I am announcing a new policy to help public housing residents take back their homes.

First, at my direction, Secretary Cisneros is in Chicago to provide emergency funds for enforcement and prevention in gang-infested public housing. We'll put more police in public

housing, crack down on illegal gun trafficking, and fill vacant apartments where criminals hide out. And we'll provide more programs like mid-night basketball leagues to help our young people say no to gangs and guns and drugs. Second, we will empower residents to build safe neighborhoods, and we'll help to organize tenant patrols to ride the elevators and look after the public spaces in these high-rise public housing units. Finally, we're going to work with residents in high-crime areas to permit the full range of searches that the Constitution does allow in common areas, in vacant apartments, and in circumstances where residents are in immediate danger. We'll encourage more weapons frisks of suspicious persons, and we'll ask tenant associations to put clauses in their leases allowing searches when crime conditions make it necessary.

This new policy honors the principles of personal and community responsibility at the very heart of this administration's efforts. It also shows all Americans that their Government can move swiftly and effectively on their behalf.

Now we must move swiftly on the crime bill before Congress. The bill provides the right balance of protection, punishment, and prevention. It will put 100,000 more police officers on the streets for community policing efforts that work. It will make "three strikes and you're out" the law of the land and provide money for new prisons. And it will pay for a wide variety of prevention programs to give our young people a future they can say yes to.

This is a crucial moment in the crime bill debate. It's time to tell Congress you've waited long enough for comprehensive national crime legislation, that you don't want political posturing or frivolous amendments, and instead, you need help to take back your communities.

This crime bill is for all our people, but nobody needs it more than the people like the mother of three who lives right here in Washington. A week ago, this 33-year-old mother came home after celebrating her 10-year-old daughter's birthday to find a gang of gunmen ransacking her apartment. The mother had one plea for the intruders: "If you believe in God, please don't shoot my children. Shoot me." The

reply was cold and terrifying. "I don't believe in God," said one of the gunmen. Then he shot her daughter dead. Before the gunfire ceased, another child and the mother were both shot, and her 3-year-old son witnessed the whole thing. The sad fact is, the police now believe the shootings were carried out by youths who hang out in the very apartment complex where that mother was trying to raise her children.

There are many rights that our laws and our Constitution guarantee to every citizen, but that mother and her children have certain rights we are letting slip away. They include the right to go out to the playground and the right to sit by an open window, the right to walk to the corner without fear of gunfire, the right

to go to school safely in the morning, and the right to celebrate your tenth birthday without coming home to bloodshed and terror. The crime bill will help us take back those rights for all of our people, so will our new policy to protect public housing residents.

We must decide we will not tolerate more tragedies like that mother's. When we do that, together, we can replace our children's fear with hope.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 5:20 p.m. on April 15 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 16.

Remarks on Bosnia and an Exchange With Reporters in Newport News, Virginia

April 17, 1994

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, I've received a number of reports today on the situation in Bosnia. I've also been in touch today with President Yeltsin.

We don't have any definitive reports on the status of Gorazde, but I can tell you that there has been some progress in the negotiations between the United Nations and the Serbs. Mr. Akashi has been working on it, Ambassador Redman and Mr. Churkin, and they may have something to announce shortly.

I also—I don't know that this has been made public or not, but the Serbs released 16 Canadian soldiers, and we're working on the release of the other UNPROFOR forces today. So the situation is still tense around Gorazde. There is still some degree of uncertainty there, but there has been, as of my latest report, which was just about 10 minutes ago, some progress in the negotiations between the U.N. and the Serbs on getting back to the negotiations and reducing the tensions.

Q. What's the U.S. role been?

The President. Well, essentially, we've been—Ambassador Redman has been there. He's been working very hard, especially for the last 7 hours, trying to hammer out an agreement that everybody could live with, along with the U.N. and Mr. Churkin.

Secondly, we've worked very closely with the Russians trying to think about what the end game might be, how we can work this out to a successful conclusion over the long run. And of course, we're still a very important part of the NATO alliance, and we're committed to doing whatever we're asked to do by General Rose. But keep in mind, except for the safe area around Sarajevo, our role in NATO has been to provide close air support, or, if necessary, to protect the UNPROFOR troops, the U.N. troops, and where it's possible to do that. So we have the role, but we also have this diplomatic role, and we're doing our best to fulfill it.

Q. Have there been any violations of the new truce since the 3-mile zone was agreed to?

The President. I don't want to comment on anything definitively with regard to Gorazde, because we have been getting reports over the last 4 and 5 hours, kind of mixed reports. But on balance, the last report I got was encouraging in terms of an agreement impending between the U.N. and the Serbs.

Q. Were the next reports reports of tank incursions into that zone?

The President. There's one, I think. I think there was a news report that there was at least one tank sighted. But I want to say that we