

Remarks Announcing Community Policing Grants February 8, 1995

Thank you so much, Sheriff Kelly. He spoke so well I hardly want to say anything. *[Laughter]* Chief Viverette, thank you very much for your work and for coming here and for what you said. I thank Attorney General Reno and Lee Brown for their outstanding work for our country. I'm very proud that they're a part of our administration. And I thank Chief Brann and John Schmidt for the work they have done on this police program, and of course, the Vice President for what he said and for what he does and for clarifying the nature of public spending under the LEAA program. If they bought me an airplane I'd still be Governor. *[Laughter]* I want to thank the Members of Congress who are here for what they did on the crime bill last year. And I want to thank many who are not here, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Senator Biden, without whom we might never have had this crime bill. I thank him especially in his absence.

This is security week at the White House, I think you could say. We talked about immigration yesterday and the need to protect our borders from illegal immigration. Today we're releasing our drug control strategy and talking about police officers. I'd like to put it briefly in the context of what I have been trying to achieve here.

I ran for this office with a vision that at the end of this century we need to be preserving the American dream for all of our people and making sure that as we move into the next century we're still the strongest country in the world. I think our strategy should be what I have called the New Covenant, creating more opportunity but insisting on more responsibility and strengthening our communities at the grass-roots level.

The role of government and specifically the role of the Federal Government at this time, it seems to me, is to do three things: to expand opportunity while shrinking bureaucracy, to empower Americans to make the most of their own lives, and to enhance our security at home and abroad.

In ways that are obvious, the crime bill we passed and the drug strategy we pursue furthers all of those objectives. We are working hard

to help communities to arm themselves to fight crime and violence. We are working hard to help people to defeat the scourge of drugs, both by enforcement as well as prevention and education and treatment. The crime bill makes the most of the resources that we have achieved by shrinking the Federal bureaucracy dramatically, to the point where, when we finish, it will be the smallest it's been since President Kennedy was in office.

Now, that leaves a lot up to you. It's up to all of you to hire and train the police officers. It's up to you to deploy them as you see fit. It's up to every citizen in every community in America to take responsibility to join the fight.

I am all for more flexibility for States and localities. This crime bill, particularly as it was changed—and I want to thank some of the Republicans who are here for your contribution for that—we said, “Hey, we ought to give the local communities more flexibility in deciding which prevention programs to fund; they know what works and what doesn't.” That was the wisdom of the Congress, but there is a national interest in having 100,000 more police officers. There is a national interest in doing that because we know enough to know that when crime triples—violent crime—over 30 years, and the size of our police forces only increase by 10 percent over 30 years, and more police get off the street and into the cars, that becomes a national problem. And when all the police groups in the country come to us and say this is in the national interest, then we have to respond to that as well.

Today we are here to award grants to over 7,000 new police officers in over 6,600 small cities, as the Attorney General said. It's an astonishing thing to me that more than half the communities in our country said, “We want to be a part of this.” If ever there was evidence that there is a national interest here, that is it.

I wish that violence were a stranger to small towns. I wish that this really could have been just a problem for big cities where all the criminals in the country are congregated. But we all know that's not true. Indeed, we all know that most of our big cities have seen a decline

in the crime rate in the last couple of years, even though it's still at a horrendously high level. But many of our smaller communities are dealing with the aftermath. Indeed, I have many law enforcement officers tell me that they are now dealing with the consequences of being near bigger cities that have gotten more effective in combating crime, and some criminals are looking for greener pastures and more poorly armed police forces in smaller communities all across America.

All of you know that I grew up in small towns in my home State. I can still remember when we never locked the car or the house and we never gave any thought to whether we were walking outside in the night or in the daytime. I wish that that were the case for all Americans today, but it isn't. And until it is again, we have to continue to work with you to restore those conditions and to fight the people who are keeping them from occurring.

Police officers on the street are still the best protection we know for not only enforcement but for prevention, for all the ways that the chief spoke about and all the ways that all of you know. We also know that police officers on the street need the help of people in their communities. That's why in the State of the Union Address, I tried to emphasize the role of citizens.

When I lived at home in Little Rock, we lived in an area that was very mixed in every way, racially, economically, and in terms of the citizens who lived there. And our crime rate went up and down and up and down over the decade I lived in the Governor's mansion. And the biggest difference was whether the citizens in our neighborhood were participating in the neighborhood crime watch and helping the police in our neighborhood to do their job.

So we are well aware, we are well aware that we need the help of the citizens. But unless we follow through on our commitment to have 100,000 police officers on the street, the United States Government will not be doing its job and exercising its responsibility to give you the opportunity to make the streets safer. We need 100,000 more badges.

Just before I came out here, someone gave me a police badge from a neighboring State of Arkansas. I saved them, along with all the military coins I have from the units I've met. So now I have another one to put back on my desk. I ant 100,000 more of these on the

street. That's in the national interest, and the Congress and the country should not back away from that. We should stay right with it until we have 100,000. That's what all these people lobbied for, and we should stay all the way.

I want to thank again all of those, but especially those in the Justice Department, who worked so hard to create a nonbureaucratic way for these police officers to come out. And that's been discussed. And I want to say again, I'm working hard to give more flexibility to State and local governments. I'm working hard to turn more authority back to States and local governments, even to the private sector where that's appropriate. I support the changes that were made in the last crime bill to give more flexibility in the area of prevention. But I will oppose any attempt to undermine the capacity of the crime bill to produce the 100,000 police officers that we promised the American people, that you came up here and lobbied for, and that you worked so hard for. We must not do that.

You know, one of the things that I've never read in all these biographies or accounts of my career is I actually once participated in the LEAA programs; I taught law enforcement officers. I taught constitutional law and criminal procedure. I was proud to do it, and it was a good program. But it didn't obscure the fact that we also have problems in the LEAA, as the Vice President outlined. And more importantly, it doesn't obscure the fact that we have a national interest and now a national solemn responsibility to take the money we save by reducing the Federal work force to go forward with 100,000 police.

I also want to emphasize—I saw a lot of you nodding your head out there when Lee Brown was up here talking—our crime bill and our national drug control strategy are intimately related. With the help of the crime bill, this year's drug controls budget is the largest in the history of the Federal Government. Last year, for the first time in 25 years, I submitted to Congress a budget—and Congress largely adopted it—which reduced both domestic and defense spending in an attempt to get control of this terrible deficit. For the first time in 25 years, the only things that went up were interest on the debt and the medical costs of the Government and the cost of living for Social Security. The aggregate spending, otherwise, went down. And I am proud of that. This year I have sub-

mitted to Congress a budget with another \$140 billion in spending cuts.

Bult remember our objectives here. The Federal Government's job is to increase the ability of people to make the most of their own lives and to enhance security. So we're spending more on education and training and children and their future in our budget. We're also spending more on security, not only abroad but at home: more to fight the drug war, more to fight crime, more to do things that will make people more secure in their homes, in their schools, on their streets, in their workplaces. That's why this drug control strategy is important. And it's also important to note that it, too, is funded in the crime bill. A big part of the prevention section of the crime bill is an antidrug strategy, to take this country's commitment to fighting drugs to new heights.

I thank Lee Brown for his leadership, and I am going to do everything I can to implement the 1995 drug control strategy that has four steps: We propose to work more closely with foreign governments to cut drugs off at the source. We propose to boost community efforts to educate young people about the dangers and penalties of drug use, something that is very important. We see fresh and disturbing efforts—evidence that a lot of young people are no longer afraid that they will get sick, that they can die, that they can become addicted if they have casual drug use. We will work to break the cycle of crime and drugs by providing treatment to hardcore drug users who consume most of the drugs and cause much of the crime and health problems. And we will punish people who break the law more severely.

This strategy gives your communities more resources to fight drugs as well, and more flexibility, as I said, in the use of those resources.

I want to work with the new Congress to build on this crime bill, but we should not move backwards. We shouldn't undermine our ability to implement the drug control strategy. We shouldn't walk away from our commitment to provide 100,000 police officers. And we shouldn't let this become a partisan political issue. The crime bill passed with bipartisan support; it should be maintained with bipartisan support.

I have no idea what political party the law enforcement officers standing up on this platform belong to, and I don't care. It's enough for me that they're all willing to put on a uniform and put their lives on the line to make the people of this country safer and give the kids of this country a better chance.

We should listen to the experts in law enforcement and do what is right and keep this above politics. Above all, we must keep it above partisan politics. Let us listen to the evidence and do what is right for America. That should be our only test.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:40 a.m. in Room 450 of the Old Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Gene Kelly, sheriff, Clark County, OH; Mary Ann Viverette, police chief, Gaithersburg, MD; Joseph Brann, Director, Community Oriented Policing Services program (COPS); and Associate Attorney General John Schmidt.

Remarks Announcing the Nomination of Michael Cerns To Be Director of Central Intelligence and an Exchange With Reporters *February 8, 1995*

The President. Ladies and gentlemen, I'm delighted to see you all here. I thank the Members of Congress especially for being here, Senator Thurmond, Senator Specter, Senator Leahy, Congressman Dicks. Is Congressman Gilman here?

It is my pleasure and honor today to announce my intention to nominate General Mi-

chael Cerns to be the next Director of Central Intelligence.

General Cerns will face a challenge whose difficulty is matched only by its importance. The cold war is over, but many new dangers have taken its place: regional security threats; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; terrorists who, as we have seen, can strike at the