

And I am gratified beyond measure, but I can also tell you this: We have a lot left to do. When the baby boomers like me retire, we have to have reformed Medicare and Social Security enough so it will be there for our children and so that we're not going to bankrupt our children as they raise our grandchildren to pay for our retirement.

We still have to work through the big tobacco settlement issue next year to guarantee that we protect the health of our children. It's still the number one public health problem in America. Illegal smoking among children will lead to bigger health care bills and more problems than anything else.

We have a number of exciting issues to deal with in the environment and on climate change. But the general thing is people now believe that we get it in America. You should all have a very high level of confidence that our country

can function, that it can succeed, that we can meet any challenge.

And I just am so grateful to have been given the chance to serve and to play a role in once again proving that America will always be a young nation if at every time of challenge it can redefine what it means to be an American. That's what you're doing, and I hope you're very proud of it. And I hope, so far, you're very pleased with the results.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:32 p.m. at a private residence. In his remarks, he referred to Brian and Myra Greenspun, dinner hosts, and their daughter, Amy; Gov. Bob Miller of Nevada and his wife, Sandy; Bonnie Bryan, wife of Senator Richard H. Bryan; and Landra Reid, wife of Senator Harry Reid.

Memorandum on Importation of Modified Semiautomatic Assault-Type Rifles

November 14, 1997

Memorandum for the Secretary of the Treasury

Subject: Importation of Modified Semiautomatic Assault-Type Rifles

The Gun Control Act of 1968 restricts the importation of firearms unless they are determined to be particularly suitable for or readily adaptable to sporting purposes. In 1989, the Department of the Treasury (the Department) conducted a review of existing criteria for applying the statutory test based on changing patterns of gun use. As a result of that review, 43 assault-type rifles were specifically banned from importation. However, manufacturers have modified many of those weapons banned in 1989 to remove certain military features without changing their essential operational mechanism. Examples of such weapons are the Galil and the Uzi.

In recent weeks Members of Congress have strongly urged that it is again necessary to review the manner in which the Department is applying the sporting purposes test, in order to ensure that the agency's practice is consistent with the statute and current patterns of gun use. A letter signed by 30 Senators strongly

urged that modified assault-type weapons are not properly importable under the statute and that I should use my authority to suspend temporarily their importation while the Department conducts an intensive, expedited review. A recent letter from Senator Dianne Feinstein emphasized again that weapons of this type are designed not for sporting purposes but for the commission of crime. In addition, 34 Members of the House of Representatives signed a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu requesting that he intervene to stop all sales of Galils and Uzis into the United States. These concerns have caused the Government of Israel to announce a temporary moratorium on the exportation of Galils and Uzis so that the United States can review the importability of these weapons under the Gun Control Act.

The number of weapons at issue underscores the potential threat to the public health and safety that necessitates immediate action. Firearms importers have obtained permits to import nearly 600,000 modified assault-type rifles. In addition, there are pending before the Department applications to import more than 1 million

additional such weapons. The number of rifles covered by outstanding permits is comparable to that which existed in 1989 when the Bush Administration temporarily suspended import permits for assault-type rifles. The number of weapons for which permits for importation are being sought through pending applications is approximately 10 times greater than in 1989. The number of such firearms for which import applications have been filed has skyrocketed from 10,000 on October 9, 1997, to more than 1 million today.

My Administration is committed to enforcing the statutory restrictions on importation of firearms that do not meet the sporting purposes test. It is necessary that we ensure that the statute is being correctly applied and that the current use of these modified weapons is consistent with the statute's criteria for importability. This review should be conducted at once on an expedited basis. The review is directed to weapons such as the Uzi and Galil that failed to meet the sporting purposes test in 1989, but were later found importable when certain military features were removed. The results of this review should be applied to all pending and future applications.

The existence of outstanding permits for nearly 600,000 modified assault-type rifles threatens to defeat the purpose of the expedited review unless, as in 1989, the Department temporarily suspends such permits. Importers typically obtain authorization to import firearms in far greater numbers than are actually imported into

the United States. However, gun importers could effectively negate the impact of any Department determination by simply importing weapons to the maximum amount allowed by their permits. The public health and safety require that the only firearms allowed into the United States are those that meet the criteria of the statute.

Accordingly, as we discussed, you will:

1) Conduct an immediate expedited review not to exceed 120 days in length to determine whether modified semiautomatic assault-type rifles are properly importable under the statutory sporting purposes test. The results of this review will govern action on pending and future applications for import permits, which shall not be acted upon until the completion of this review.

2) Suspend outstanding permits for importation of modified semiautomatic assault-type rifles for the duration of the 120-day review period. The temporary suspension does not constitute a permanent revocation of any license. Permits will be revoked only if and to the extent that you determine that a particular weapon does not satisfy the statutory test for importation, and only after an affected importer has an opportunity to make its case to the Department.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: This memorandum was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 14 but was embargoed for release until 10:06 a.m. on November 15.

The President's Radio Address *November 15, 1997*

Good morning. Today I want to talk about the progress we're making in our fight against crime and the steps we're taking to build on that progress. All over our country, crime is dropping. Responsibility and respect for the law are on the rise. But the true measure of our progress is whether our children can play in their front yards, whether they can walk to school in safety, whether our parents can unlock their front doors, whether our grandparents can walk down the streets with confidence, free from the fear of violence.

To give our families that security, we've put in place a comprehensive plan to bring the crime rate down with 100,000 new community police officers, tougher punishment, stronger antigang prevention, the Brady bill. And we've led an unprecedented effort to join the forces of national, State, and local law enforcement to fight crime in every community in America.

In the 3 years since I signed the crime bill into law, we know our strategy is having a real, measurable impact. Crime has dropped now for a record 5 years in a row. Today we have even