

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

more dramatic proof of our progress, the Annual National Crime Victimization Survey. It says that in 1996, crime rates fell to their lowest recorded level in nearly 25 years. Property crime is down. Violent crime is down. Since 1993, murder has dropped by 22 percent, 10 percent in 1996 alone. This remarkable drop in the crime rate is no accident. The hard work of people from Washington to every community in the country made it happen.

Community policing is at the center of this success. In only 3 years, we've already funded 65,000 new police officers under the crime bill, and we're close to meeting our goal of putting 100,000 new police officers on our streets.

Our Nation's police officers will tell you that our ongoing effort to ban lethal assault weapons has also been critical to their ability to do a better job. We've banned these guns because you don't need an Uzi to go deer hunting, and everyone knows it.

But as effective as the assault weapons ban has been, we know that some foreign gun manufacturers are getting around the ban by making minor modifications to their weapons that amount to nothing more than cosmetic surgery. Well, we didn't fight as hard as we have to pass the assault weapons in the first place only to let a few gun manufacturers sidestep our laws and undermine our progress. Assault weapons in the hands of civilians exist for no reason but to inspire fear and wreak deadly havoc on

our streets. They don't belong on our streets or in our schoolyards, and they shouldn't be aimed at our children. That's why we banned them 3 years ago and why we're taking action today.

Effective immediately, the Secretary of the Treasury is suspending the importation of all modified assault weapons for 120 days while we study whether they can be permanently blocked from our borders and banned from our streets. We must continue to do everything we can to crack down on illegal firearms and the organized criminals, terrorists, and drug lords who seek them. Yesterday President Zedillo of Mexico and I signed an unprecedented international convention to help fight illegal gun trafficking in our own hemisphere and to strengthen law enforcement's ability to combat this deadly trade.

Working together over the last 5 years, we've proven that we can drive down the crime rate. Now we have to press on, confident that we can take our streets back from crime, take assault weapons and illegal firearms out of the hands of criminals, enact a tough but smart juvenile justice bill, and eventually give our families and our children the real security they deserve.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7:30 p.m. on November 14 in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 15.

Remarks on Arrival in Sacramento, California *November 15, 1997*

Good morning. Two years ago, I approved a BRAC recommendation to close McClellan Air Force Base, but only after I was convinced it was feasible for McClellan to privatize and that the prospects of success were strong. Since then, I've had to fight at every turn with the Members of Congress who have resisted our efforts to give the Department of Defense the tools it needs to privatize more of its operations more easily.

This year, the so-called Depot Caucus tried to block the ongoing competition for the Kelly and McClellan workload altogether. I said if they did that, I would veto the entire defense

bill. Eventually Congress reached a compromise to allow the competitions for this important work to go forward. The Secretary of Defense has assured me that although the language in the bill is not ideal, I quote, "the Department of Defense has flexibility to proceed with the remaining public-private competitions at Kelly and McClellan bases in a way that is fair to both sides." For this reason, I have decided to sign the defense bill.

We will continue to do everything we can to help McClellan make the transition. The Vice President and I have met with business and community officials. We have listened to your