

police for our streets, stronger gun laws, and smart prevention. Combined with the dedication of police and communities across the country, these tools are making a major difference. The overall crime rate is at a 26-year low; the murder rate is at a 33-year low; and the violent crime rate is down to its lowest point in over two decades. We must do more to ensure that these downward trends continue. Today I call on Congress to reauthorize the COPS program to hire up to 50,000 more community police officers, send me a budget that funds our COPS

program and other vital crime-fighting initiatives, and pass commonsense gun legislation to keep guns out of the wrong hands. By working together, we can continue our Nation's unprecedented success in reducing crime and make America's streets even safer.

NOTE: This statement was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on October 13 but was embargoed for release until 6 p.m. on October 15.

## Remarks at the Opening of the Plenary Session of the Middle East Summit in Sharm al-Sheikh, Egypt

*October 16, 2000*

Well, first of all, I would like to thank you, President Mubarak, for having us all here, for providing an opportunity for the Palestinians and the Israelis to come together and to talk and for us all to try to save the peace process.

I thank His Majesty, the King of Jordan; and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, who has been working very hard out here, and we're grateful for him; and my good friend Javier Solana from the European Union—for all being here.

I think it's very important that we all be quite honest and blunt with each other, but we be sober and serious about this. We're here because we would like to achieve three objectives. We want to end the violence and restore security cooperation. We hope to achieve agreement on an objective and fair factfinding process on what happened to bring us to this sad point and how we can avoid having it ever happen again. And we want to get the peace process going.

The future of the peoples involved here, the future of the peace process, and the stability of the region are at stake. We cannot afford to fail here. In order to succeed, though once again we have a situation piled high with grievance, we have got to move beyond blame. We have got to focus on what we're going to do tomorrow and the next day and the next day. We have to have a balanced, mutual disengagement, and we have to restore the security co-

operation and have the confidence-building measures necessary for people to go about their business and live in peace and begin to rebuild the bonds of trust.

The only other thing I want to ask you all is just to remember before these terrible events how far we have come since September 19, 1993, when the Palestinians and Israelis signed the agreement to find a peaceful future together and resolve their differences peacefully on the lawn of the White House.

We shouldn't give it all up for what has happened in the last few weeks. And what has happened in these last few weeks reminds us of the terrible alternative to continuing to live in peace and to continuing the peace process.

President Mubarak, I am grateful to you, again. We can, if we will look to the future and proceed in a fair and balanced way, we can do what we have to do here, and we must do that.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:30 p.m. at the Jolie Ville Golf Resort. In his remarks, he referred to President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt; King Abdullah II of Jordan; United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan; and European Union Council Secretary General Javier Solana, High Representative for the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.