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September 9, 1976

SUBJECT:

DC CRIME BILL

The President has signed a bill (HR 12261) which prohibits the Council of the District of Columbia from revising for two years the criminal laws of the District by direct amendment of the D.C. Criminal Code or through changes in police regulations.

QUESTION: Does signing this bill mean that the President is:

1. Opposed to gun control?
2. Opposed to home rule for the District of Columbia?

GUIDANCE:

1. The President's position on gun control is widely-known. He is opposed to manufacture and sale of "Saturday Night Specials" but does not want efforts to regulate illicit use of handguns to infringe on the rights of law-abiding citizens. [There is even doubt that this law will affect the DC Code regarding handguns. Congress, in fact, is now considering a Concurrent Resolution, which would have the legal authority to overrule the DC Code in this area.]
2. This bill does not affect home rule. It merely allows the District more time to revise its criminal code.

BACKGROUND: The District of Columbia, through the District of Columbia Law Revision Commission, established by Congress in 1974, has been examining the District's laws and recommending changes. The Bill (HR 12261) extends for an additional two years - until January 3, 1979 - Congress's sole jurisdiction over the criminal laws of the District. The purpose of the bill is to give the Commission adequate time to complete its work and make its recommendations to Congress.

The bill, however, also contains a provision which apparently was directed at the District's Firearms

Control Regulations Act, which is presently being considered by Congress. The provision was added by amendment by Rep. John Dent of Pennsylvania.

The effect of the Dent amendment is unclear. It was apparently intended to prohibit the Firearms Control Registration Act, which would ban possession of handguns to anyone who does not, on the date of its enactment, possess a valid registration for a handgun. The Justice Department, however, feels that the Bill (HR12261) would not invalidate the gun control measure because other laws may take precedence over it. And the House, apparently agreeing, is now considering a Concurrent Resolution, which would have the legal authority to overrule the DC Code.

JBS

July 22, 1975

SUBJECT:

CRIME STATISTICS UP  
TO 18 PERCENT

FBI crime statistics for the first three months of this year show an 18 percent increase over the same period last year. Attorney General Levi called this "one of the most terrifying facts of life, which we have come to accept as normal and which we must not accept as normal."

Does the President have any reaction to the 18% increase in crime?

GUIDANCE: The statistics released by the FBI highlight the concern raised by the President in his crime message on June 19th about the rise in violent crime and the need to coordinate action by the federal, state and local governments, and the need for support from the American people. He believes that if Congress enacts the programs he recommended, the means available for an effective attack on crime will have been substantially strengthened. (These include mandatory prison sentences for violent offenders, tougher gun controls, and a five year extension of L.E.A.A.)

When will the crime legislation go to the Hill?

GUIDANCE: We would expect the legislation to go to the Hill sometime today.

Why has it taken so long to transmit this legislation?

GUIDANCE: We wanted to insure that the kind of handgun (Saturday night special) was carefully defined so as not to be overbroad and include weapons which have legitimate sporting uses.

Will there be a briefing on the legislation?

GUIDANCE: The Justice Department will hold a briefing on the legislation tomorrow morning at 10:00 A.M., provided the legislation goes up today.

January 31, 1975

SUBJECT: SAXBE HITS FAILURE TO CUT CRIME

In his final speech as Attorney General, William Saxbe yesterday said that crime statistics have shown an incredible increase in recent years despite billions in Federal aid. Saxbe called for a prompt, relentless, and in-depth study to determine how wisely LEAA is spending its funds. Saxbe also suggested the creation of a permanent, joint Congressional oversight committee for the Justice Department.

What is the President's reaction to the comments by Mr. Saxbe?

GUIDANCE: White House officials have been working with the Justice Department towards the development of a Presidential message on crime and a legislative package. I would imagine this package would go forth in the next thirty days.

I would point out that the President is very much concerned about this whole area, and in fact, on December 20th, met for over an hour with the Acting Attorney General (Silberman), the Director of the Office of Criminal Justice (Rose), and the Administrator of LEAA (Velde). The purpose of that meeting was to review Justice' progress in fighting crime and how the Federal Government can work in partnership with the states and local governments to reduce crime.

What's the President's reaction to Saxbe's suggestion that a permanent, joint Congressional oversight committee for the Justice Department be created?

GUIDANCE: I know of no policy decision to establish such a committee, nor have I heard of any such talk.

Does the President agree with the Attorney General that LEAA should be reviewed to see if it's spending its money wisely?

GUIDANCE: LEAA authorizing legislation expires on June 30, 1976. The Administration will be reviewing LEAA and its strengths and weaknesses prior to that date.

October 4, 1974

SUBJECT:

CRIME RISES 16%

The F.B.I. reported yesterday that serious crime in the United States increased by 16% in the first six months of 1974, over the first six months of 1973. This was the largest rise in six years and among the largest since the F.B.I. started keeping records in 1930.

What is the President's reaction to the 16% increase in crime?

GUIDANCE: The President was very much aware of the increase in crime when he gave his speech to the International Association of Chiefs of Police on September 24. The President stated at that time that there was no easy answer, and that the control of crimes, especially violent crime, was one of the top items of priority.

What is the President going to do about the increase in crime?

GUIDANCE: The President has asked the Attorney General for a series of recommendations for increasing the Federal government's ability to prosecute, and recommendations on how to increase the States' ability to prosecute at the state and local level.

The President has also directed the Department of Justice and the Attorney General to undertake, in cooperation with state and local governments, A Career Criminal Impact Program. Its purpose is to target and keep track of professional criminals. This program is to assign priority to cases of habitual criminals and expedite the process by which they are brought to justice.

What's the President's reaction to Attorney General Saxbe's intervening in the District of Columbia and Lorton Reformatory's policy of furloughs?

GUIDANCE: The President supports the Attorney General's decision to ask the District to conform to justice guidelines on use of furloughs.

JGC

