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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN *l.f.*

THE WHITE HOUSE

INFORMATION

WASHINGTON

February 25, 1975

ATC-1

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: JIM CAVANAUGH *Ⓢ*
SUBJECT: GUN CONTROL

With the new Congress looking for issues and the crime rate rising dramatically, many observers think that "this is the year" for gun control legislation.

A full decision paper containing a series of options, as well as the recommendations of the Attorney General and the Department of the Treasury, will be available for your review within the next two weeks. This memorandum is submitted in anticipation of that to provide you with some background should you receive a press question on this topic.

Congressional Development

The Conyers Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee began hearings on February 18 on 23 separate gun control bills ranging from repeal of the 1968 Act to handgun confiscation.

At his confirmation hearings, the Attorney General stated that he would try to develop legislation which would outlaw the so-called Saturday Night Special handguns. The Subcommittee has postponed requesting Administration witnesses to give the Attorney General time to develop his position -- but gun control is such an intensely emotional issue that the Administration's position will have to ultimately be decided by you.

The National Rifle Association is also gearing up for battle and, for the first time, has set up a separate political organization to lobby full time on the gun control issue.

Administration Response

Attorney General Levi may recommend you include something on handguns in your upcoming crime message. Justice is still working on their suggestions which will include a full range of proposals from stricter enforcement of existing legislation to outright handgun confiscation.

The present strategy is for you to handle the issue in two parts: the first issue will be the Administration's position before the House, and one option you will have is to recommend support of some sort of Saturday Night Special legislation (whether your Administration prepares and submits it or endorses legislation already introduced by a member of the House). Supporting Saturday Night Special legislation is very close to the "middle ground" on this issue. It is our present understanding that even the NRA would be willing to accept something in this area.

The second issue is whether you should sign more stringent legislation should it pass the Congress. There is substantially more time to analyze your position on this issue as it continues to develop. We will send you the decision paper when it is ready and keep you informed of any significant developments in the interim.