AN ADDRESS BY REP. GERALD R. FORD, R-MICH.,
AT GRADUATION EXERCISES OF THE GRAND RAPIDS, MICH., POLICE ACADEMY
AT UNION HIGH SCHOOL
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN
6 P.M. FRIDAY, JULY 17, 1970

FOR RELEASE ON DELIVERY

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In the words of the ancient Romans, "The people's safety is the highest law." In my view, there is no job more vital than that of being a guardian of the people's safety. It is a most important trust.

We have in our national constitution a Bill of Rights, the first ten constitutional amendments, which became effective Dec. 15, 1789. Nearly 13 years earlier the State of Virginia adopted a Bill of Rights which is the father of all American bills of rights.

The Virginia Bill of Rights declared: "Government is, or ought to be, instituted for the common benefit, protection, and security of the people, nation or community; of all the various modes and forms of government, that is best which is capable of producing the greatest degree of happiness and safety, and is most effectually secured against the danger of maladministration."

We in America are concerned about safeguards against corruption and oppression in government, and we have legislated to the end that the people shall be protected against such maladministration. We are also concerned, and rightfully so, with the public safety and the proper administration of justice.

The members of this graduating class will assist in the achievement of one of government's most vital functions -- that of attaining the highest possible degree of public safety.

The lot of the policeman has always been hard. It is particularly difficult today when social forces are at work that increasingly involve the police in...
control and in peace-keeping. This subjects officers of the law to a wide variety of verbal and physical abuse.

As you go about your peace-keeping tasks, please remember that for every detractor and revolutionary who shouts foul names at you there are thousands of supporters who are grateful for your efforts and thank God that there are still men today who are courageous enough to stand between the constructive law-abiding citizen and outright anarchy.

The overwhelming majority of the 200 millions of people in the United States admire you and are keenly aware of the dignity of your work.

They know your work is meaningful and that you are dedicated to serving the community. They know there is no greater service a man can render than to save the life of another.

This is why I said at the outset that there is and should be a natural feeling of pride here tonight. I personally am delighted to be here to tell you men how very proud I am of you.

You graduates, as you begin your chosen work, can be proud in the knowledge that except for you your fellow citizens of Grand Rapids would be in greater danger and might very well suffer or die. You can be proud in the knowledge that you are select men, men selected because of your special qualifications, men who have volunteered to risk your lives for others.

The public safety. Another way to say it is peace in the streets.

We hear a lot about peace these days. But what peace is more important to the American citizen than peace in his own back yard and peace out on the street in front of his home? You are the keepers of the peace. There is no job more important.

You know it constantly amazes me that there are some Americans, badly misguided Americans, who call policemen fascists.

The truth is that fascism will only come to America if there is a complete breakdown of law and order, with the American people demanding a tight and brutal centralization of governmental authority in order to ensure their own bodily safety. So you will be serving as front line troops against fascism.

Fascism is hateful. It is the complete antithesis of democracy. It is synonymous with the creation of a national police force.

To the extent that local citizens help their local policeman do his job they are erecting a barrier against fascism — against the creation of a national police force. And the ridiculous revolutionaries who pelt police with rocks and bottles

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are creating situations which could lead to the very oppression they falsely complain of.

Members of the Congress are anxious to help strengthen local law enforcement. At the same time, they are taking every precaution against the creation of a national police force.

That is the reason Congress approved the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, which provides Federal aid to the states and local communities on the basis of comprehensive state plans for fighting crime.

Michigan is receiving an increasingly large slice of Federal funds under this Law Enforcement Assistance Act. In fiscal 1969 our allocation was $1,732,620. It grew to $8,580,000 in fiscal 1970 and will climb to an estimated $15,521,000 in fiscal 1971.

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The Law Enforcement Assistance Act offers a real opportunity for improvement in local crime-fighting -- for new ideas, new techniques and new equipment. In the final analysis, the success of the program will depend upon how well local police, the courts, the correction agencies and state and local governments respond to the opportunity.

There are still other opportunities to step up and improve the war against crime. There currently is a drive in progress to move 13 major anti-crime bills sponsored by the Administration through the Congress of the United States.

I personally will not give up the effort to enact this legislation until these bills have passed the House of Representatives, have received the final approval of both the House and Senate, and have been sent to the President for his signature.

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I personally agree with Justice Hugo L. Black that the Supreme Court in the last several years has hobbled law enforcement by insisting upon justice-defeating procedures which unduly favor accused criminals.

We must attach far more importance to convicting the lawbreaker than to assisting his efforts to "beat the rap." Fortunately the tenor of Supreme Court decisions in recent months has changed for the better with the changed makeup of the court.

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I expect Congress to approve measures which will:

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Prevent racketeers from using illegally obtained money to invest in or take over legitimate businesses operating interstate and allow the use of such antitrust weapons as forfeiture of financial interest in case of violations.

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As you discharge your duties, there are some among our citizenry who will call you names.

I feel sure you will not lose your cool when you consider that what the letters P, I, and G really stand for are Pride, Integrity and Guts.

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