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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED IN THE
WHITE HOUSE BRIEFING ROOM

Two months ago, at Yale University's Law School, I spoke about a subject that touches the lives of all Americans--crime. Today, I am sending the Congress a special message spelling out in concrete terms the program for curbing crime and ensuring domestic tranquility which I advocated in that speech.

First and foremost, our efforts should be directed toward the protection of the law-abiding citizen. For too long, the law has centered its attention more on the rights of the criminal than on the victim of the crime. It is high time we reversed this trend and put the highest priority on the victims and potential victims.

Even though the chief responsibility in combatting crime lies with the state and local officials, the Federal Government can provide leadership. It can improve the quality of existing Federal laws and the Federal justice system. It can enact and vigorously enforce new laws governing criminal conduct at the Federal level. And it can provide financial and technical assistance to state and local governments in their efforts to stem lawlessness.

For example, I propose that the Congress enact mandatory prison sentences for Federal offenses committed with firearms or other dangerous weapons--and for hijackers, kidnappers, traffickers in hard drugs and repeated Federal offenders who commit crimes of violence. I urge state and local authorities to take similar steps.

I am unalterably opposed to Federal registration of guns or gun owners. I do propose that the Congress enact legislation to deal with those who use handguns for criminal purposes. I also propose further Federal restrictions on so-called "Saturday night specials."

We can and must make our legal system what it was always intended--a means of insuring "domestic tranquility" and making America safe for decent, law-abiding citizens.

This is a matter of deep personal concern to all Americans. So I urge the Congress to reflect this concern for the victims of crime by acting on this message in a prompt, positive and non-partisan spirit.

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