

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE UNTIL 6:00 P.M., EDT  
THURSDAY, JUNE 19, 1975

Office of the White House Press Secretary

-----  
THE WHITE HOUSE

FACT SHEET

CRIME MESSAGE

The President is today transmitting to the Congress a special message on crime in which he advocates enactment of mandatory minimum sentences for offenders who commit violent Federal crimes. In addition, he asks the Congress to improve Federal fire arms laws and their enforcement. The President also recommends the extension of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration through 1981.

BACKGROUND

The Federal Bureau of Investigation has estimated that the rate of serious crime was 17 percent higher in 1974 than in 1973. This is the largest annual increase in the 44 years the Bureau has been collecting statistics. Moreover, these figures reflect only the reported crimes. A study of unreported crime sponsored by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration indicates that the actual level of crime in some cities is three to five times greater than that reported. Significantly, and tragically, the number of crimes involving threats of violence or actual violence has also increased.

Two months ago, at the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Yale Law School, the President delivered a speech on the problem of crime in America. In that address, the President stressed his concern for the innocent victims of crime and the impact which crime -- particularly violent crime -- has had on domestic tranquility in America. The message which the President is sending to Congress today spells out his program for combatting crime.

HIGHLIGHTS OF MESSAGE

While acknowledging that the Federal role in the fight against crime is a limited one, the President sets forth three important responsibilities of the Federal government in this vital area:

- Providing leadership to State and local governments by ~~improving~~ the quality of Federal laws and the criminal justice system.
- Enacting and vigorously enforcing laws covering criminal conduct that cannot be adequately regulated at the State or local level.
- Providing financial and technical assistance to State and local governments and law enforcement agencies, and thereby enhancing their ability to enforce the law.

I. PROVIDING FEDERAL LEADERSHIP

A. Improving the Quality of Federal Laws

Noting that Federal criminal laws should be a model upon which State and local governments can pattern

more

their own laws, the President recommends to the Congress the enactment of a comprehensive criminal code.

In codifying the Federal criminal law, the President recommends that criminal fines be increased from a maximum of \$10,000 to a maximum of \$100,000 if the defendant is an individual, and \$500,000 if the defendant is an organization.

The President also recommends the enactment of mandatory minimum sentences for persons who:

- (1) commit Federal offenses involving the use of a dangerous weapon,
- (2) commit such extraordinarily serious offenses as aircraft hijacking, kidnapping and trafficking in hard drugs, and
- (3) are repeat offenders who commit Federal crimes that cause or have the potential to cause personal injury to others. Limited exceptions to the imposition of mandatory minimum sentences would be set forth in the statute.

The President recommends that Federal appeals courts be given limited authority to review sentences imposed by Federal trial court judges.

#### B. Improving the Federal Criminal Justice System

In addition to reform of the criminal law, the President believes that we must improve the manner in which our criminal justice system operates. In the message, he makes numerous suggestions and recommendations designed to improve the quality of the Federal criminal justice system. These include:

1. Establishment of "career criminal" programs designed to assure quick identification and prosecution of persons who repeatedly commit serious offenses.
2. Continuation and expansion of programs designed to divert certain first offenders into rehabilitation prior to trial.
3. Creation by the Congress of additional Federal District Court judgeships and expansion of the criminal jurisdiction of United States Magistrates.
4. Up-grading of prison facilities, including the replacement of large, outdated prisons with smaller, more modern ones.
5. Directing that the Attorney General, as Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation, ensure that the Federal government is making the best possible use of its resources in the area of offender rehabilitation.
6. Enactment by the Congress of legislation to provide limited compensation to victims of Federal crimes who suffer personal injury.

more

Additionally, the President calls upon employers, including Federal agencies, to keep open minds on the hiring of persons formerly convicted of crimes.

## II. BETTER LAWS AND ENFORCEMENT

- A. The President is unalterably opposed to Federal registration of guns or gun owners. He has directed the Attorney General to prepare legislation prohibiting the manufacture, assembly or sale of "Saturday Night Specials." The President also proposes to strengthen current law so as to strike at the illegal commerce in handguns and to emphasize the responsibility of dealers to adhere to the law. He has also ordered the Treasury Department's Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to double its investigative efforts in the nation's ten largest metropolitan areas and to immediately employ and train an additional 500 firearms investigators for this priority effort.
- B. The President believes there are several other areas in which Federal law and enforcement can be improved to strike at those who have made crime a business. Laws relating to organized crime, consumer fraud, white-collar crimes and protection of civil rights can and should be improved.
- C. The President also has directed the Domestic Council to conduct a comprehensive, priority review of the Federal effort in the treatment and prevention of drug abuse, to ensure that Federal programs and policies are appropriate to meet the current and mounting threat.

## III. PROVIDING FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Federal government must continue to help State and local governments in carrying out their law enforcement responsibilities. Therefore, the President will submit to the Congress a bill that will continue the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration through 1981.

The Bill will authorize \$6.8 billion for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration to continue its work through 1981. Further, the bill will increase LEAA's annual funding authorization of \$1.25 billion to \$1.3 billion so that additional funds may be made available to urban areas with high crime rates. Finally, the bill will place additional emphasis on improving State and local court systems.

# # # #