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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT TO BE DELIVERED TO THE  
FORT WORTH-TARRANT COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION, TARRANT COUNTY  
CONVENTION CENTER, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

It is a great honor for me to be here this afternoon before the distinguished members of the Fort Worth-Tarrant County Bar Association, the Federal Bar Association, and the Fort Worth-Tarrant County Young Lawyers Association.

It is a special privilege for me to be speaking to you just two days before we celebrate Law Day all across the United States. The rule of law is the very foundation of any rational society. And the rule of laws created by the people, which the people willingly obey, is central to a free and democratic society.

In our Bicentennial year, Law Day takes on special significance. For our Founding Fathers, in establishing this country, dared to put the ultimate authority into the hands of those described in the first three words of the Constitution: We, the People.

Not all men accepted this idea. Thomas Jefferson, in his first Inaugural Address, recognized that some honest men feared a Republican Government could not be strong. But Jefferson disagreed with them. He believed this to be the strongest Government on earth. He said: "I believe it the only one where every man, at the call of the law, would fly to the standard of the law, and would meet invasions of the public order as his own personal concern."

Jefferson touched the very heart of our national faith. He said history would tell whether men could be trusted to govern themselves. And history has its answer. Two centuries later, the United States of America is still a country where the people make the laws, and the people obey them. And the United States of America still has the strongest and freest form of Government on earth, and that's why we can say--we are proud to be Americans.

Now we are on the threshold of our third century. I see this as the century of individual freedom, in which individuals will increasingly fulfill themselves and achieve their natural potential. For this to be the century of individual freedom, it must be the century of individual security.

For the law to provide that security, we must have laws that are respected. We must keep the law alive by making sure that it changes to meet the changing needs of our society.

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While protecting the rights of the accused, our emphasis must always be on protecting the rights of the victim. The victim must be our primary concern, and the law must be our means of fulfilling the promise in our Constitution: to ensure domestic tranquility.

We must continue working to identify and solve those social and institutional problems which cause crime in the first place. But there are also new efforts we can make, and have been making, to fight crime by improving the administration of justice. We must ensure that the law is administered fairly, swiftly and surely.

One of my earliest concerns as President was to seek some cures for our crime problem -- a problem which has been growing for more than fifty years. I put crime control among the top items on our national agenda. In 1975 we saw the rate of increase in crime drop substantially, from 17 percent in 1974 to 9 percent.

And we have found some productive ways to deal with crime by providing ideas and Federal seed money to the state and local authorities who have the responsibility for most criminal prosecution.

Here in Tarrant County, for example, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration will have provided almost \$2 million in aid to the District Attorney's Office from 1973 to 1978.

The money has been used imaginatively by your local law enforcement agencies to serve many purposes. It has helped your attorneys to use their time and talents more effectively, by providing administrative help, continuous training, and capital improvements such as computers.

One very important function it has served has been to put prosecuting attorneys in direct and immediate contact with police officers. By screening the cases as they are brought in, prosecution has been made more effective. This has helped to relieve overcrowding in the courts, which all too often lets criminals hide behind the logjam.

We must continue our efforts at the Federal level to help local authorities improve their administration of justice. That is why I have recommended that funding for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration be extended through 1981, so that programs like these may continue, and so that we can confront special crime problems.

For example, the L. E. A. A. last year finished a report on rape and its victims, and is currently sponsoring a major national survey on that subject. The studies will help local authorities to deal more sensitively with rape victims, and will aid in the prosecution of rapists. Over \$18 million of L. E. A. A. funds have been used by state and local authorities to find more effective ways of dealing with rape.

In another area, I am pleased to note that today the L. E. A. A. and the administration on the aging are signing an agreement which will help to target law enforcement resources on the criminal threat to the elderly.

Still another program with special promise was instituted at my direction, shortly after I took office.

In September of 1974, I directed the Justice Department to undertake, in connection with state and local government, a career criminal impact program.

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The career criminal program is founded on a very basic truth: most Americans are law-abiding, and the vast majority of serious crimes in this country are committed by a small minority of habitual offenders.

This small minority has chosen to place itself outside society, committing criminal acts not once but again and again. They are a chronic threat to our security. We must identify them, bring them to justice, and make their punishment swift and certain.

Here in Texas, two career criminal programs are underway. In Houston, one program began in July of last year. And today, the average time from arrest to indictment is nine days for those identified as career criminals, versus 42 days for other criminal cases. The time from arrest to trial for career criminal defendants is a month less than for other criminal defendants. Sentences have averaged 25.8 years.

And -- most important of all -- since this program got underway in Houston, there has been a significant decrease in the number of armed robberies compared to the year before.

Not far from here, in Dallas, another career criminal program has been in effect for the last six months. In that brief time it has zeroed in on 23 third-time offenders. It has shown the career criminal what awaits him. Of those 23, twenty have received life sentences, and three received 40 year sentences.

Let me make clear that we do not pursue this swift justice and these heavy sentences out of vindictiveness. I believe that in general we must do everything we can to rehabilitate those who have committed crimes, and to help them regain their place in society.

But for these career criminals, rehabilitation has obviously failed. These individuals have all been to correctional institutions before, and they have demonstrated that for them, at least, rehabilitation programs have served no useful purpose.

Therefore, our duty is to protect their innocent victims -- and potential victims -- by separating these career criminals from society, and by keeping them confined for a longer period of time.

Through programs such as this, we can help relieve the American people of a terrible threat to their lives and safety. By combatting crime, we reaffirm the right of every American to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

We must not be content until the potential criminal faces arrest so certain, punishment so heavy, that he will lose his taste for acts of crime and violence.

Let me summarize the actions I have taken to reduce crime in America. In addition to instituting the career criminal program, and recommending the extension of funds for the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration:

- My budget for fiscal year 1977 provides funds for four new Federal prisons;
- I have asked the Department of Justice to develop new programs to protect and assist all witnesses in Federal criminal proceedings;
- While supporting the right of law abiding citizens to own firearms, I have recommended legislation which would make mandatory sentences for those who use a gun in the commission of a Federal crime.

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- I have intensified the fight against hard drugs, which we all know are connected with crime. Just yesterday, I sent to the Congress a special message on druge abuse calling for mandatory minimum prison sentences for those convicted of trafficking in hard drugs.

I have consulted with the leaders of Mexico, Colombia and Turkey to urge stronger action by them in cooperating with us to halt the flow of hard drugs into the United States. And I have recommended that the Congress increase Federal funds to get drug addicts into treatment and out of crime. We are spending ten times more Federal funds on drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation this year than we spent just seven years ago.

- In addition to mandatory minimum sentences for drug traffickers and for Federal crimes involving the use of dangerous weapons, I have recommended to the Congress mandatory minimum sentences for repeat offenders who commit violent crimes, and for criminals guilty of grave offenses such as aircraft hijacking and kidnapping.

All our efforts in these many areas have been aimed at ensuring domestic tranquility and the rule of law. But let us remember that crime is just one threat to the peace and security of all Americans. At the Federal level, we must fulfill our obligation to provide national security as well as personal security. Until we can achieve the rule of law in the global sense, a strong military capability is essential.

The American people must be kept secure and free from the threat of outside attack. This means we must maintain our high state of military readiness-- and we will. We will continue to ensure that the United States of America is unsurpassed in military capability.

Here in Texas, you play an important part in maintaining our national security. Your aerospace industry keeps us strong, helps us in the search for new ways to deter aggression, and I salute you for it.

The Defense program I am proposing will mean that the United States will remain unsurpassed for years to come.

- Just about three weeks ago, we laid the keel for the first of a new class of nuclear submarines to be armed with the most accurate submarine ballistic missiles in the world. This Trident Missile Fleet will be the foundation for a formidable, technologically superior force through the 1980's.
- We are now completing final testing on the world's most modern and capable strategic bomber, the B-1. And I have budgeted over one and a half billion dollars for its production in fiscal year 1977.
- We are accelerating work on a new intercontinental ballistic missile for the 1980's;
- We are developing a new cruise missile for our air and naval forces.
- Nor does our effort stop with weapons, for we are also expanding our Army from 13 to 16 combat divisions.

I pledge that we will keep America strong. Not strong for the sake of war-- but strong for the sake of peace. We will continue our policy of peace through strength. And at the same time, we will maintain our role of international leadership negotiating wherever possible to reduce the level of tensions in the world.

There are no easy answers, no simple solutions to the complex problems of personal and national security. But our determination to solve these problems is in itself a source of strength. And our warning to those who threaten our security, at home or abroad, is the same: Americans will never be intimidated, and Americans will keep the security and independence we have had for 200 years.