

Department of Health and Human Services

John Monahan, Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
Portia Mittleman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Aging
Melissa Skofield, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Policy and Communications

Department of the Interior

Debra Knopman, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Jeffrey Lawrence, Assistant Administrator for Legislative Affairs

Department of Transportation

Mark Gerchick, Chief Counsel, Federal Aviation Administration

Department of Veterans Affairs

Dale Renaud, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs
Edward Chow, Deputy Assistant Secretary

NOTE: Biographies of the appointees were made available by the Office of the Press Secretary.

Remarks to the National Association of Police Organizations and an Exchange With Reporters

June 24, 1993

The President. First, let me welcome you here. And this is our replay from the time we got weathered-out in March. And I'm glad you could all come back. I want to thank you for the work you do and for the support that you gave to me last year when I was attempting to become President and for the support you have given so many of our initiatives in the last 5 months.

I have been busily at work for the last several days working with the United States Senate in our attempt to pass our economic plan, which will reduce the national deficit by \$500 billion and provide some significant incentives to turn this economy around, including keeping interest rates down, which is critical to our future. We've had a dramatic increase

in the number of ordinary Americans, I imagine including some people in this room, who have, for example, refinanced their homes in the last 5 or 6 months, because we've got interest rates at a 20-year low, 130,000 new construction jobs in the economy, 755,000 jobs overall. It is critical that we pass this. And that's what we're primarily involved in today, as I'm sure you understand.

I also asked the Congress to adopt a modified bill for making a down payment on our investment package, which they did, which included, as I'm sure you know, some \$200 million for communities to hire police officers. That is a down payment on the campaign commitment I made to empower our communities to hire another 100,000 police officers over the next 4 years, to go to more community policing, to provide for safer streets, and to support you in the work you're doing.

I also want to tell you that the Attorney General and I have been working hard for the last several weeks with interested Members of Congress to bring up a crime bill this year. Sadly, it did not pass last year, for all kinds of reasons. That crime bill is still to be finally defined, but I can assure you it will include the Brady bill; it will include a provision for boot camps as alternative punishment for first-time nonviolent offenders; it will include a continuing effort to hire more police officers on our streets and to expand community policing. I welcome the ideas, the expertise, and the advice of all of you in putting this bill together and in pushing it through the Congress. It will be a high priority for the administration, and I expect it to begin soon.

We can't really revive the whole fabric of our economy until we put the society back together in the places where it's broken. One of the things that we're attempting to do in this economic bill is to finally test the proposition of whether the private sector can revitalize the most distressed areas of our big cities or our small towns and rural areas with an empowerment zone concept that would offer real big incentives for people to go into a lot of the meanest streets in this country and invest their money to put people to work,

to start businesses, to try to make those places come alive again in positive ways.

We also, as all of you know, are committed to doing the things that we've been talking about. I think it's worth just closing with the thought that there are a lot of people in this country who are genuinely insecure today. That shooting at the swimming pool here in Washington, DC, that I'm sure all of you read about, is a horrible example of the kind of mindless behavior that is ripping at the fabric of society. And now I think of how many children are afraid to go back to the pool, a place where wholesome recreation will occur, a place where kids can stay out of trouble and in water in the summertime; how many of their parents might be afraid for them to go back.

That is the sort of thing that I hope we can keep in the minds of our policymakers as we deal with the crime bill and deal with these other issues. And I assure you that I welcome your input into all of them.

I think I'd like to close just by saying a special word of appreciation to the Justice Department and the FBI, to the United States Attorney, and to the New York City Police Department for the work that they have done in making the arrests that broke up a terrorist gang in New York. It was a very impressive piece of work and a real tribute to the local folks and to the cooperation that the Federal Government and the local people had. And I thank them for that, and thank you.

Now, the Attorney General and I are here. We're going to answer your questions. But first we're going to answer a few from the press.

Terrorism

Q. Mr. President, can I follow up—

Q. To follow up on that, do you support a Federal law for the death penalty for terrorists? And can you tell us how and exactly when you found out about this plot?

The President. First of all, I support the crime bill. I supported the crime bill last year which expanded the death penalty in many different areas. And as you know, I have a longstanding support for capital punishment.

But let me answer the specific thing. I was briefed about this operation at about the time

it was occurring, a little before. I knew that they had been working on it. But all the credit for this goes to the FBI and the local people. They did the work. They've been working on this for some weeks now, and I don't think I should say more about it. The Justice Department will have more to say at an appropriate time.

Q. Can you say whether you believe that everyone has been arrested who was involved in this? And have you had any communication, do you plan to have any communication with President Mubarak or any of the other possible victims?

The President. I have not yet had any communications with any of the people that were on the list. I think any questions about the nature of the conspiracy and the group should be answered by the law enforcement officials, not by me.

Senate Budget Vote

Q. Mr. President, do you have the votes yet in the Senate for your budget to pass at this time, now?

The President. I certainly hope so.

Q. Well, I ask the question because your spokesman said earlier that you didn't have them but that you expected to by the end of the day. Do you have them now?

The President. Who did? Who said that earlier?

Q. Dee Dee said that—that you didn't have them this morning, but you expected to have them by the end of the day. Do you have them now?

The President. Senator Mitchell is my ultimate authority on that. We're working our way through these amendments now, and we just had, as I understand it, Senators Harkin, Metzenbaum, and Wellstone just announced their support for the package, pursuant to an agreement to reduce the size of the Medicaid cuts. There are still about \$10 billion Medicaid cuts over and above what the House put in, which was about \$50 billion.

So that will help, and that puts us three votes closer. And I just don't—I can't say for sure. We're going to have a whole series of amendments which go through today. And then at the end of the day we may find ourselves in a position where some Members want some things which can only come out

of the conference, and they may have to just decide whether to let the bill go to conference or not. The House Members had to make the same sort of decision. But I'm hopeful. That's all I can tell you. I'm hopeful. We're working hard, and I'm hopeful.

Q. Does that bring it under \$500 billion, sir?

The President. No. Not to my knowledge. The last time I saw it, it didn't, Andrea [Andrea Mitchell, NBC News]. Now, I haven't seen the exact details of the last—the last time I heard about it, about an hour and a half ago, it did not.

Q. What kind of momentum do you want from this vote, and do you see this as a real turning point for your Presidency?

The President. There have been a lot of those lately. [Laughter] The vote in the House was, and this will be. We have to go on to conference. If it passes today, this will be a very loud statement. It will say that both Houses of the Congress are committed to the largest deficit reduction program in history, to putting the taxes and the spending cuts in a trust fund, to spending cuts equal to and now greater than the tax increases, and to an extremely progressive program where those who can, best able to pay, are asked to pay. The Senate Finance Committee bill, according to the Congressional Budget Office, distributes 78 percent of the burden to people with incomes above \$200,000 whose taxes were lowered in the 1980's while their incomes went up.

So I think that this is a very, you know, it's a very important vote, and I hope we can prevail. But I never count my chickens before they're hatched.

Thank you.

Q. Are you counting any Republicans? Any Republicans, Hatfield or Jeffords?

The President. I've asked; that's all I know.

Q. Did you ask in phone calls?

Q. Mr. President, is the final arrangement on gays in the military going to require them to stay in the closet, sir?

The President. Bye, everybody; no more questions. I have to answer their questions. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:43 p.m. in the Indian Treaty Room of the Old Executive Office Building.

Exchange With Reporters Prior to a Meeting With the Arkansas Rollin' Razorbacks Wheelchair Athletes

June 24, 1993

Economic Program

Q. Mr. President, surrounded by all these winners, do you think you can be a winner tonight?

The President. Well, I hope so.

Q. What is your latest assessment?

The President. I feel just the way I did before the House vote. I'm just working. I'm working. We're picking up a few and——

Q. Have you called any Republicans?

The President. I think I should answer that question after the vote tonight.

Q. We don't want to blow their cover.

The President. I think I should answer that question——

Q. Mr. President, in retrospect, do you wish you had reached out more to Republicans early on? Some moderates say they'd be on board if you had.

The President. I don't know. I did call a number of them. And I tried to—after Senator Boren and Senator Danforth announced their little coalition—I don't mean little, I mean their coalition—I also reached out to some Republicans then. And I continue to reach out to some Republicans in the House. It's just rare in these first tough budget votes to get any votes from the other party. And I hope that this will never happen again. I hope that it won't ever happen again.

But you have to understand, we're also trying to reverse 12 years of, basically, people being told the easy thing and letting the country just sort of slowly grind downhill. And we're trying to change it. And these changes are never easy. I never thought they'd be easy. I'm hopeful for tonight.

Q. What would be—in the conference committee, sir?

The President. I'll be glad to answer that question after we see if we're going to have a conference. First, we have to prevail to—