

What should the States do? What should the Federal Government do? What is the appropriate thing to do in the Brady cases? And I believe what we've tried to do is the right course.

I think the Attorney General has tried to increase Federal gun prosecutions. We've asked for resources to do more. But we've also tried to do it in a sensible way that left a lot of the burden and the criminal law where it belongs, with the local prosecutors. And I think to try to take a case like that, where actually the Brady bill worked, and if we had more comprehensive checking so that no one could sell a gun without a Brady background check, we'd have an even safer society, is not a very good argument for the other side to make.

And I think it's truly ironic that the NRA is now criticizing us for not throwing everybody in jail that fails a Brady background check when they opposed the Brady bill. If it had been up to them, we wouldn't be doing these background checks, and 500,000 more felons, fugitives, and stalkers would have handguns, so—

#### **Northern Ireland Peace Process**

**Q.** Is there a break in the Irish impasse?

**The President.** Thank you. We're working it.

#### **National Rifle Association**

**Q.** Can I follow up on that, sir? Mr. President, why do you think the NRA has chosen this particular moment, though, to attack you?

**The President.** I have no idea. I really don't know. Must be a good fundraising tactic. I honestly don't know. I don't know.

**Q.** Because they've had their way mostly on Capitol Hill, it seems, up to this point.

**The President.** I don't know. I think they know that the majority of the American people support us on this bill, and if they get the bill before the Congress, it will pass. So maybe it's some strategy to try to keep it from ever being in an acceptable form to be voted on one way or the other.

I don't know. You'll have to ask them. I can't figure it out. Thanks.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:50 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks,

he referred to Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president, National Rifle Association.

#### **Remarks Honoring the 1999 Stanley Cup Champion Dallas Stars**

*March 16, 2000*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Please be seated. I want to welcome Thomas Hicks and his family, Gary Bettman and his daughter to the White House. Robert Gainey, the manager; and to all the Stars, including the captain, Derian Hatcher—I might say the first American-born captain of a Stanley Cup team.

And I welcome Representative Eddie Bernice Johnson here, who is very proud of this team. We're glad to have you back in the White House. There are a lot of people from Texas here today, including many members of our administration and former members of our administration. I want to welcome you here. I often—I miss it when you don't come by. And now I know how to get you back. [*Laughter*] So thank you.

As all of you know, we're here to congratulate the 1999 Stanley Cup winner, the Dallas Stars. Ice hockey is a fascinating game, but for those of us who grew up in the South, we know it's normally dominated by people north of the Mason-Dixon line. There was not a skating rink in my hometown until I was over 40 years old.

But the Dallas Stars changed the perception of hockey. They were the first Sun Belt team to win hockey's Holy Grail in the 107-year history of the contest. So now Dallas will be known not just for the Cowboys and Super Bowls but for the Stars and the Stanley Cup.

It occurred to me when I was getting ready for this that hockey is a lot like Washington politics. It's a rough game—[*laughter*]—with a lot of lead changes. And usually you never know who's going to win until the final moment.

And that is, of course, literally what happened last June in game six, when the Stars clinched their first Cup—3 overtimes, 111 minutes, all of us, even people like me who don't skate very well, on the edge of our seats. We watched Ed Belfour block shot after shot, MVP Joe Nieuwendyk leading the

charge on offense. And I still remember when Brett Hull shoveled the last puck past Dominik Hasek, a man I once met in Buffalo, to capture the win. I would be afraid to try to put anything past the guy. [*Laughter*] This was a very impressive game, to those who are initiated and those who are becoming initiated into the thrills of professional hockey.

Opening and closing the year with a victory over the Sabres, that final game was a perfect ending to a nearly perfect season. The Dallas Stars not only took home the Cup but also the president's award with the best record in the league for the second year in a row.

And I want to also acknowledge someone who is not here today, the coach. Every good coach I know, and I've been privileged to know quite a few great ones, always say that the players make great coaches. But great coaches also help the players bring out the best and play as a team.

The Stanley Cup is the oldest athletic trophy in North America. So it's about more than winning. It embodies our fascination with athletics, with determination, with teamwork. All the Dallas Stars earned this Cup. And after seeing Wednesday night's victory over the Devils, I see you're not going to give it up without a fight. I like people who don't give it up—[*laughter*—without a fight.

Congratulations to all of you. And now I'd like to ask the commissioner of the National Hockey League, Gary Bettman, to say a few words.

[*At this point, Mr. Bettman, team owner Thomas Hicks, and team captain Derian Hatcher made brief remarks. Mr. Hatcher presented a Stars jersey to the President.*]

**The President.** You may have noticed today that I had this tie on. We had the annual Speaker's Saint Patrick's Day lunch today a day early up on Capitol Hill, so maybe I should just wear this tomorrow. [*Laughter*] This is great.

Thank you very much. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Mr. Bettman's daughter Brittany; Dallas Stars general manager Robert Gainey, players Ed Belfour, Joe Nieuwendyk, and Brett Hull, and

head coach Ken Hitchcock; and Buffalo Sabres goalie Dominik Hasek.

### **Videotape Remarks to the Carnegie Endowment's Annual Nonproliferation Conference**

*March 16, 2000*

I am grateful for the opportunity to address the Carnegie Endowment's Annual Nonproliferation Conference. I thank you for coming together again to focus on the crucial task of curbing the spread of weapons of mass destruction. All of you know how serious this challenge is, from North Korea's nuclear and missile programs to ongoing risks that sensitive materials and technologies will spread from the former Soviet Union, including to Iran, to the imperative of bringing China into global nonproliferation regimes, to the continuing need for vigilance against Saddam Hussein.

Stemming this tide has been a critical priority for me for 7 years now, and it will be for this year, as well. In a few days, I'll travel to South Asia. There are those in the region who hope we will simply accept its nuclear status quo and move on. I will not do that. India and Pakistan have legitimate security concerns. But I will make clear our view that a nuclear future is a dangerous future for them and for the world. And I'll stress that narrowing our differences on nonproliferation is important to moving toward a broader relationship.

I know there are some who have never seen an arms control agreement they like, because rules can be violated, because perfect verification is impossible, because we can't always count on others to keep their word. Still, I believe we must work to broaden and strengthen verifiable arms agreements. The alternative is a world with no rules, no verification, and no trust at all.

It would be foolish to rely on treaties alone to protect our security. But it would also be foolish to throw away the tools that sound treaties do offer: a more predictable security environment, monitoring inspections, the ability to shine a light on threatening behavior and mobilize the entire world against it. So this year we will work to strengthen the