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JOHN HOHENWARTER

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 2, 1999

To: Representative Thomas Gannon
Chairman House Judiciary Committee

From: John Hohenwarter
NRA State Liaison

Re: House Judiciary Committee Hearing
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

On behalf of the National Rifle Association of America, I would like to submit for the record the enclosed written testimony of Mr. Charlton Heston, President of the NRA. Mr. Heston recently presented this testimony before the Committee on Government Reform in the U.S. House of Representatives. I believe the members of the committee will find this testimony to be very helpful. As always, please feel free to give me a call if you have any questions.

TESTIMONY OF CHARLTON HESTON
PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIMINAL JUSTICE, DRUG POLICY AND HUMAN RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
4 NOVEMBER 1999

Mr. Chairman:

Please forgive my fatigue. I am extremely short on sleep, so in the interest of brevity I propose we not talk about issues we dispute. Instead let's talk about what's not in dispute.

There is no dispute that just 150 miles from here, in sleepy Richmond, Virginia, they cut gun homicides by one-half in just one year. They employed the awesome simplicity of enforcing existing federal gun law. It's called Project Exile. The word is out on the streets of Richmond that, if you're a felon caught with a gun, you WILL go to jail for 5 years. They're actually changing criminal behavior and saving lives.

That's not partisan, that's not conjecture, that's not hyperbole.

Thanks to those fearless prosecutors, innocent Americans are alive today in Richmond that would've died at the hands of armed felons.

But elsewhere across this land, innocent Americans alive today will be dead tomorrow or next month or next year ... because this Administration, AS A POLICY, is putting gun-toting felons on the streets in record numbers.

If you don't believe the NRA, believe the recent independent Syracuse University study that revealed federal prosecutions of gun crimes have dropped by 44% during the Clinton-Gore Administration.

Right here in our nation's capital, there were some 2,400 violent crimes committed with firearms last year. Guess how many of those armed criminals were prosecuted from federal referrals? Only TWO.

In fact, little old Richmond had more prosecutions under federal gun laws in 1998 than California, New Jersey, New York and Washington, D.C. --

COMBINED!

Why does the President ask for more federal gun laws if he's not going to enforce the ones we have? Why does the President ask for more police if he's not going to prosecute their arrests?

This deadly charade is killing people and surely will kill more. When political hot air is turning into cold blood ... when duplicitous spin is becoming lethal ... somebody's got to speak up.

No lives will be saved talking about how many hours a waiting period should be, or how many rounds a magazine should hold, or how cheap a Saturday Night Special should be.

But if you want to impact gun crime NOW, you will demand that Project Exile be implemented in major U.S. cities NOW.

I wish you luck. For a year we have challenged, urged and pleaded with the Clinton Administration to take 50 million dollars -- out of a 14 billion dollar budget -- and implement Project Exile's tough enforcement program nationwide.

Their response?

A Justice Department spokesman told USA Today, quote, "... it's not the federal government's role to prosecute" these gun cases.

Deputy Attorney General Eric Holder ridiculed Project Exile as a "cookie cutter" approach to fighting crime and called it "fundamentally wrong" to earmark funds for enforcing federal gun laws. **FUNDAMENTALLY WRONG!**

A senior official of the BATF tried to explain away the 44% decrease in federal prosecutions of gun crimes by saying, "... we seek to prosecute the few sharks at the top rather than the numerous guppies of the criminal enterprise."

Mr. Chairman, those "guppies" with guns are murdering innocent Americans who are left defenseless by a White House and a Justice Department that lack either the time or the spine to enforce existing laws against violent felons with guns.

We challenge Bill Clinton to direct Attorney General Janet Reno to call upon all of the district attorneys around the country, instructing them to take on just 10 more federal gun cases each month. That is their job. The result would be the prosecution of about 10,000 more violent felons with

guns -- 10,000 potential murderers taken off the streets of America.

And we urge this body to do what the White House won't ... to appropriate 50 million dollars to implement Project Exile in major cities across the country.

And if the President calls that "fundamentally wrong," ask him what you call it when the odds of doing time for armed crime are no worse than the flip of a coin.

Thank you.