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Crime - Strategy and Schedule

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January 27, 1994

MEMORANDUM FOR CIRCULATION

FROM: RAHM EMANUEL
MICHAEL WALDMAN

Subject: Proposed Communications Strategy and Schedule for Crime

I. INTRODUCTION

The strong positive response to the President's discussion of crime in the State-of-the-Union suggests that the President has an opportunity to make the issue "his." This memo outlines a communications strategy with the goals of (1) passing the Crime Bill; and (2) identifying the President with the issue of crime and violence.

The President has succeeded in redefining the debate on crime. No longer is it prevention vs. punishment. Instead, the issue of crime and violence has been changed to punishment and values (learning the difference between right and wrong.)

Polls show that the issue of crime, along with health care and the economy, tops the public's list of concerns. In addition, polls show that a majority of Americans feel that the moral fabric of our society is disintegrating. Therefore, by redefining the issue of crime in terms of punishment and values, we get the best of both worlds.

II. LEGISLATIVE CALENDAR

The next eight weeks until the congressional conference report is issued are critical. Legislatively, our goal is the passage of the Crime Bill. However, the Crime Bill is a means to a further end. The Crime Bill is also a vehicle to communicate to the public a set of strongly-held values that the President embraces, as well as the President's tough stance on crime and criminals.

The legislative schedule, which serves as our window of opportunity, is as follows:

February '94	- House committee and sub-committee action
Early-Mid March	- House Crime Bill
Late March	- Conference
March 28-April 10	- Recess
Mid April	- Crime Conference Report

III. COMMUNICATIONS MESSAGE

Our communications strategy should initially focus on the 6-10 week window while the House considers the crime bill(s). Our principal goal in this period is to identify the President with the crime issue. We must both present the President as tough on crime, and define the his values.

To this end, the President should focus on three key parts of the crime package: "three strikes you're out;" 100,000 police officers; and the ban on assault weapons. The first thematic bloc should be on 3-Strikes-You're-Out (tough on crime); then, more broadly, to cops (values); and then close with guns (again, values).

These three components demonstrate that the President is serious about fighting crime and restoring the moral fabric of our society. In particular, the 100,000 police officers provision is Clinton's signature on the Crime Bill.

Considering the fact that Newt Gingrich is attacking the President's crime proposals as too weak, Democratic House members should highlight the fact that Gingrich's crime proposals have never included funds for more cops.

IV. SCHEDULING

We should consider some events that underscore the "values" orientation of the State-of-the-Union. These events fall into two categories: over-the-top events that address the big picture of crime and societal values; and smaller events that underscore the three key components of the President's crime proposal (listed above). The over-the-top events must be scheduled by April 1, 1994. The smaller events should be ongoing over time.

A. OVER THE TOP EVENTS: THE PRESIDENT'S VALUES

The goal of these events is to identify the President with the issue of crime.

- National Town Hall on Crime: In a select city, the President could hold a televised, national "town hall" on crime and violence. We should start working with one of the networks to set this up. ABC News has indicated interest in a town hall on violence and crime. It would be smart to do this over the February recess, when Members of Congress are at home.
- Interview/Essay for Mass Publication: The President could give an interview to or write an essay on crime and violence in America for a mass publication such as Reader's Digest, TV Guide, or Parade Magazine.
- Counter-Scheduling: The President should go into the lion's den, so to speak, by giving a speech to a group of manufacturers of assault weapons.

- Open Letter to NRA: The President should write an open letter to NRA members, as a fellow sportsman, calling on them to support the ban on semi-automatic weapons. This letter could be submitted to a magazine as an advertisement.
- Church Sermon: The President could deliver a sermon to a church congregation.

B. ONGOING EVENTS: THE PRESIDENT'S PROPOSAL

The role of these events is to highlight the three major components of the President's crime bill: "3 Strikes," 100,00 cops, and assault weapons.

1) COPS

- New Cops: The President could speak to a graduating class of a police academy. This speech would give the President the opportunity to both highlight the 100,00 cops provision, and also talk about values. In this speech, the President would highlight the importance of police officers, not only in terms of deterring crime, but also in terms of strengthening communities. The police officers have a responsibility to be role models, to reach out to kids, and to try to instill in them a sense of right and wrong.
- Community Policing: The President could spend the day in a city that has community policing. Some ideas for this day include visiting a police station, walking a police beat, and addressing to cops involved in the program.
- Neighborhood Safety: The President could accompany the mayor and neighborhood watch-group participants on a block patrol, or he could visit a victims rights group.
- Surprise Visit to Police Precinct: The President should do a surprise visit (not on schedule) to a police precinct.
- Hero Cops: We should bring in hero cops to the White House at every opportunity (e.g., for Thursday photo shoots). It's not big national news, but huge locally.
- Spouses of murdered cops: We should invite the spouses of murdered cops to the White House for a speech by or session with the President.
- Radio Address: The President should broadcast one of his Radio Addresses from a police precinct.
- Boot Camp: The President could visit a boot camp.

2) VALUES

- Boys & Girls Club: Visit a boys and girls club or some other "take back the streets" initiative in a housing project in a major city. This could be the opportunity for straight talk about responsibility and right and wrong.
- Teen Pregnancy: The President could visit a teen pregnancy prevention program, and speak to young people about responsibility and family.
- CDC Study on Violence: The Centers for Disease Control will release a study on causes of death, which will show the toll of violence. The President could make a statement, followed by the head of CDC, or Shalala, who would release the study and takes questions (could be in the briefing room, or in front of an audience).
- NBA Role Models: NBA players are holding a conference on February 12 in Minnesota. They could come to the White House the day before the conference begins. As role models to kids, the players could deliver a message of responsibility, education, and family values.

3) GUNS

- Mr. Toys for Guns: We could invite Ferdinand (?) Mateo (Mr. Toys for Guns) to the White House. This meeting would be similar to the meeting with Mark Klaas last month.

4) MISCELLANEOUS

- Cabinet Crime Fighters: Bring in the crime fighters (Reno, Lee Brown, Freeh) to report on unified, administration-wide crime effort.
- Petaluna, California: Visit Petaluna, California next time in the state.
- Conference Committee Kick-Off: The conferees should be brought in for a speech on crime.

V. CONCLUSION

In short, we want to accomplish the following beyond the passage of the Crime Bill: (1) identify the President as tough on crime by highlighting specific components of his crime bill proposal; (2) identify the President as a person of deeply-held values, a moral leader for this country. To achieve these goals, we need to schedule as many of the above events as soon as possible.

This memo deals primarily with the President's schedule, which should be developed immediately. There is, of course, a whole other surrogate schedule that needs to be developed. Members of Congress, Mayors, Police Chiefs, and the Cabinet should all be dispatched to talk about the President's agenda on crime.