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Church Burnings

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DOJ Report on Investigation into Church Arsons
January 15, 1997

CBS reported last night on a progress report about to be released by the Justice-Treasury Department Church Arson Task Force, which will provide the latest stats on the frequency of church arsons, arrest rates, etc. The numbers reported by CBS were from an early draft of the report and are not the final numbers, which will be in the final report due to be completed and sent to the White House later this week. FYI --- The President intends to use the report as the subject of Saturday's radio address, therefore we should hold off on any details or final numbers until then.

Points:

- Later this week, the President will receive a six-month report from the Church Arson Task Force, which was formalized in June of 1996 and is co-chaired by Deval Patrick at the Department of Justice and Jim Johnson at Treasury. The report will detail progress to date in the task force's investigation of church arsons nationwide.
- The report will examine incidents from January, 1995 through December, 1996 and will indicate the number of fires to date, the number of arrests made, and the success the task force has had in bringing resolution to a percentage of cases.
- CBS's report last night used numbers from an early draft of the report. We will have more to say about the report once it is completed and delivered to the President.
- [INTERNAL ONLY: In general, the report will show that arrests are up, church arsons are down and that, while there is evidence that some of the fires were racially motivated, there is still no evidence of a wide-ranging conspiracy.]

Likely final stats from the report: arrests have been made in conjunction with 107 cases; on average some type of resolution has been achieved in 1/3 of the church arsons investigated -- much better than the average resolution rate for arson cases (16 percent); and of those arsons investigated, 221 remained unsolved.]

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