

Violence—FTC Study

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PRESERVATION

## **PRESIDENT CLINTON ANNOUNCES NEW STUDY TO EXAMINE THE MARKETING OF VIOLENT MEDIA TO CHILDREN**

June 1, 1999

As part of his continuing efforts to reduce youth violence, the President will announce today that the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice will conduct a joint study of the marketing practices of entertainment industries to determine whether these industries are marketing to children violent and other material that is rated for adults. In a Rose Garden event, joined by the First Lady, the President will also challenge retailers to enforce age restrictions on adult-oriented media, so that inappropriate material is kept out of the hands of children.

**Helping Parents to Make the Right Choices for Their Children.** Numerous studies have shown that violent programming increases children's aggression toward others and desensitizes them to violence. If and to the extent that the video game, movie, and recording industries market to children violent and other materials that are rated for adults, they undermine current content-based ratings systems, make it harder for parents to control the movies, music and games their children see, and increase the likelihood of children being exposed to inappropriate materials. President Clinton therefore will announce today that the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Justice will conduct a study to determine whether and how the video game, motion picture, and recording industries market to children violent and other material rated for adults. The study will examine, among other matters, whether sectors of these industries advertise violent material rated for adults in media outlets in which children comprise a substantial percentage of the audience or whether they otherwise use marketing practices designed to attract children to violent material. The study also will examine whether these industries have adopted procedures restricting the sale of products rated for adults to children and the extent to which these procedures are effective in ensuring that children do not have access to adult-oriented material.

**Challenging Entertainment Industry Distributors to Enforce Ratings.** A key to shielding children from exposure to excessively violent media is to halt their access to these products at the point of sale. Too many children can purchase or rent violent video games and films intended for adults from retailers who do not check identifications. In fact, according to a study conducted last year, only nine percent of retail stores that rent video games refused to rent to minors games that are rated as suitable only for adults. As part of an effort to address this issue, the Washington State Retail Association and the Interactive Digital Software Association are working together to create a point-of-sale system that will notify and remind clerks to ask for identification from buyers. Because the President believes that it is wrong to sell or rent the most violent video games and movies to children without their parents' approval, he will challenge the nation's retailers today to follow the lead of those in Washington State and enforce the ratings systems when they sell or rent any adult-rated material to children.

**Advancing an Agenda to Address Youth Violence.** In an effort to comprehensively address the causes of youth violence comprehensively, the President is launching a national campaign on the issue, to involve community and religious leaders, the gun and entertainment industries, educators, parents, and young people. As he announced at last month's White House Strategy Session on Children, Violence, and Responsibility, this campaign will be modeled on the highly

successful Welfare to Work Partnership and the National Campaign to Reduce Teen Pregnancy. The campaign will call on all sectors of society to take responsibility for reducing youth violence and will disseminate efforts that are working throughout the nation.



Jeffrey A. Shesol  
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To: See the distribution list at the bottom of this message  
cc: Michael Waldman/WHO/EOP@EOP, Joshua S. Gottheimer/WHO/EOP@EOP, mawaldman@aol.com @inet, shesol@aol.com @ inet  
Subject: final draft -- remarks on children, violence & marketing -- 5/31 4pm

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Jeff Shesol

**PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON  
REMARKS ON CHILDREN, VIOLENCE AND MARKETING  
THE ROSE GARDEN  
June 1, 1999**

Acknowledgments: the First Lady; AG Reno; FTC Chairman Robert Pitofsky; Arthur Sawe [SAH-way] and his mother Caroline; Mayor Deedee Corradini, US Conference of Mayors; Wash. State Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson; Pam Eakes, founder, Mothers Against Violence in America

In recent weeks, and in the wake of tragedy, we have witnessed something truly remarkable: Americans from all regions and all walks of life coming together to prevent youth violence. As you may recall, the First Lady and I traveled to Colorado recently and spoke with the students of Columbine High School. In one sudden moment, just six weeks ago, they lost much of the innocence of youth; but I am pleased to say that they have lost little of its idealism. They have held fast to their faith in a better future – a future where hatred no longer hardens the heart; a future where values, and not violence, make up our common culture.

The national grassroots campaign Hillary described is rooted firmly in that faith. We know we can prevent youth violence if we work together, across all the lines that may divide us; and assume responsibility rather than assign blame. That responsibility, of course, begins at home. Parents must guide children as they grow, and stay involved even as children become more independent. That responsibility must be reinforced at school; in houses of worship; and in the community as a whole. The more invested we are in the lives of our children, the less isolated they can become.

Those of us in public service must also do our part, and fulfill our responsibility to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and children. To that end, there is a broad and growing national consensus that says we must do more. I am grateful that a number of gun manufacturers came here to the White House last month and voiced their support for our common-sense approach. And I am encouraged that the Senate agreed to close the deadly

gun-show loophole; require that safety locks be sold with every handgun; ban the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips; and ban violent juveniles from owning guns as adults. To the House of Representatives I say: Pass these common-sense measures into law, and do so swiftly when you return from recess. Don't put our children's safety on hold – put it at the top of your agenda.

Members of the entertainment industry must also do their part. They – and the rest of us – must not kid ourselves: our children are being fed a dependable, daily dose of violence. Studies show that the typical 18-year-old has seen 200,000 dramatized acts of violence and 40,000 dramatized murders. Kids become numb to it. They have to. And as their exposure to violence grows, so does, in some deeply troubling cases, their taste for it. We should not be surprised that half the video games the typical seventh-grader plays are violent ones.

Anyone who doubts the impact of this cultural assault can look at hundreds of studies, three decades' worth, showing the direct link between violent entertainment and violent behavior. What these studies tell us is that for adults, the boundary between fantasy and reality is a bright line; but for vulnerable children, it can be blurred. Kids who are steeped in the culture of violence can become desensitized to it and more capable of committing it themselves.

That is why I have strongly urged people in the industry to consider the consequences of what they create. One can value our First Amendment right to free expression and, at the same time, act with restraint. Our administration has worked to give parents the tools to protect their kids – and block violent programming from entering their living rooms. We have worked with the industry to develop a voluntary rating system for television, and a V-Chip that enables parents to enforce it. We've also made progress on parental screening for the Internet and ratings for Internet game sites.

Still, when violent entertainment made for adults is marketed to children, it undermines the rating systems designed to protect them. Advertisements have the power to egg children on and lure them in. Every parent knows what response a commercial for sugar cereal – or the latest "Star Wars" toy – will get from their kids. They want that product and, one way or another, they're determined to get it. So we should think twice about the impact of ads for so-called "first-person shooter" video games – like the recent ad for a game that invites players to "get in touch with your gun-toting. . . cold-blooded murdering side." Now, Arthur obviously has the inner strength and the upbringing to reject that kind of violent appeal. But not every child will.

Today, I am asking the Department of Justice and the Federal Trade Commission to study the extent to which the video game, music and movie industries market violence to children – and whether those industries are abiding by their own voluntary systems of regulation. To any company that sells violent products, I say this: Children are more than consumers. They are our future, and our most precious resource. They should not be targets in the marketing of violence. Don't make young people want what your own rating systems say they shouldn't have.

I also issue this challenge to the owners of movie theaters and video stores, to distributors, and to anyone at the point of sale: enforce the ratings systems on the products you sell. Check IDs. Draw the line. If underage kids are buying violent video games or getting into R-rated movies, then ratings systems should be strictly enforced to put a stop to it. And if gratuitous violence is getting into PG-13-rated movies, then ratings systems should be reevaluated.

I want to thank Senators Brownback, Lieberman, Hatch, and Kohl for the work they've done on this issue. And I want to commend Washington State Representative Mary Lou Dickerson, who is here with us today. Inspired by an article she read about young Arthur, Rep. Dickerson helped create a task force on video game violence. And, thanks to her work with Mothers Against Violence in America and the Washington Retailers Association, both of which are represented here today, video game retailers in Washington State will now voluntarily sign a pledge to parents, committing themselves to check IDs and block sales of violent games to minors.

I urge others to follow their lead. For this, in the end, is the way we will make progress: by constant and coordinated effort – as individuals and industries, as communities and as a nation. Youth violence is a problem we face together – and it is a problem America can solve together. By joining hands in this effort we can truly build a safer future for all our children in the 21st Century. Thank you.

Message Sent To: \_\_\_\_\_

**THE WHITE HOUSE**  
**WASHINGTON**

May 31, 1999

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION AND DEPARTMENT OF  
JUSTICE STUDY ON THE MARKETING OF VIOLENCE TO CHILDREN**

|                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>DATE:</b>          | Tuesday, June 1, 1999 |
| <b>LOCATION:</b>      | Rose Garden           |
| <b>BRIEFING TIME:</b> | 11:00am – 11:25am     |
| <b>EVENT TIME:</b>    | 11:30am – 12:15pm     |
| <b>FROM:</b>          | Bruce Reed            |

**I. PURPOSE**

To announce that the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice will conduct a joint study of the marketing practices of entertainment industries to determine whether these industries are marketing to children violent and other material that is rated for adults.

**II. BACKGROUND**

As part of your continuing efforts to reduce youth violence, you will announce today that the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice will conduct a joint study of the marketing practices of entertainment industries to determine whether these industries are marketing to children violent and other material that is rated for adults. You will also challenge retailers to enforce age restrictions on adult-oriented media, so that inappropriate material is kept out of the hands of children.

**Helping Parents to Make the Right Choices for Their Children.** Numerous studies have shown that violent programming increases children's aggression toward others and desensitizes them to violence. If and to the extent that the video game, movie, and recording industries market to children violent and other materials that are rated for adults, they undermine current content-based ratings systems, make it harder for parents to control the movies, music and games their children see, and increase the likelihood of children being exposed to inappropriate materials. Therefore, you will announce today that the Federal Trade Commission and Department of Justice will conduct a study to determine whether and how the video game, motion picture, and recording industries market to children violent and other material rated for adults. The study will examine, among other matters, whether sectors of these industries advertise violent material rated for adults in media outlets in which children comprise a substantial percentage of the

audience or whether they otherwise use marketing practices designed to attract children to violent material. The study also will examine whether these industries have adopted procedures restricting the sale of products rated for adults to children and the extent to which these procedures are effective in ensuring that children do not have access to adult-oriented material.

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### III. PARTICIPANTS

#### Briefing Participants:

Attorney General Janet Reno  
Bruce Reed  
Minyon Moore  
Janet Murguia  
Richard Socarides  
Jeff Shesol  
Neera Tanden

#### Event Participants:

The First Lady  
Attorney General Janet Reno  
Federal Trade Commission Chairman Robert Pitofsky  
Arthur Sawe

*Arthur is a nine-year-old, 4<sup>th</sup> grade student from Seattle, WA. Last year, at the age of eight, Arthur bought a video game magazine in the hopes of learning about new video games on the market. He was so disturbed by the violent ads in the magazine he took it to his mother, concerned that it was not appropriate for him to have it. Arthur's mother, Caroline, agreed with Arthur and contacted Mothers Against Violence in America. Arthur's concerns inspired a Seattle Times editorial, which led to legislative proposals in Washington and the voluntary pledge by the Washington Retailers Association to push for enforcement of the video game ratings.*

#### **IV. PRESS PLAN**

Open Press.

#### **V. SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

- **YOU** will be announced, accompanied by the First Lady, Attorney General Reno, Chairman Pitofsky, and Arthur Sawe, into the Rose Garden.
- The First Lady will make remarks and introduce Attorney General Reno.
- Attorney General Reno will make remarks and introduce Chairman Pitofsky.
- Chairman Pitofsky will make remarks and introduce Arthur Sawe.
- Arthur Sawe will make remarks and introduce **YOU**.
- **YOU** will make remarks, work a ropeline, and depart.

#### **VI. REMARKS**

To be provided by speechwriting.

#### **VI. ATTACHEMENTS**

- *Seattle Times* article "At least Joe Camel never enticed schoolkids to kill"
- *Wall Street Journal* article "Game Makers, Taking Hits, Try to Shield Kids"

SUSAN NIELSEN / Times editorial columnist

# At least Joe Camel never enticed schoolkids to kill



I KNOW, I know. Complaining about violent imagery is passé.

You risk sounding like one of those moralistic boobs who foams at the mouth over song lyrics, nudie art and daytime television: *Broken homes!*

*Loose women! Pillars of salt!*

But just for one second, let's talk about Arthur Sawe, an 8-year-old Seattle boy. And let's ask what the point was of banning Joe Camel when no one says a peep about companies that beg kids to shoot, kill and maim.

Arthur's mom doesn't let him play violent video games. That's OK with him — he likes racing and karate games better anyway. But Arthur wants to keep up on the latest cool stuff, which is why he recently got a copy of the popular Electronic Gaming Monthly. Some of his friends read it, and it's easy to find in local grocery and video stores.

That's where Arthur learned about a new video game billed as "MORE FUN THAN SHOOTING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S CAT."

The ad reads: "Bang! Meow! Bang! Meow! Come on already. It's time you moved up the food chain and take (sic) aim at something that sounds better when it explodes.

"And you can when you grab your gun, included free with 'Point Blank,' the newest arcade shooting sensation from Namco that'll have you firing until your fingers fall off."

Arthur was disturbed enough to show his mom, even though he knew he might get in trouble. He didn't understand what playing games had to do with killing cats. He wanted to find out.

Arthur probably didn't understand another ad in the magazine: a large photograph of a leather-clad woman holding a whip over a sobbing man chained to a wall. Arthur'd

have to read the fine print to see this was a video game, too. "In these 10 cavernous levels of evil traps, it's all about blurring the fine line between pleasure and pain," the ad reads.

Arthur's a lucky kid. His mom dotes on him, protects him, teaches him what words like "desensitization" mean. He attends a private Christian school in Laurelhurst. His mom, a native of Tanzania, says she tries to monitor Arthur's exposure to popular American culture. "I do my best," she said.

It only took a few ads in a glossy magazine, though, for Arthur to get exposed to these notions:

Torturing animals is fun.

Pleasure is similar to pain.

Shooting small living things is good, but shooting big living things is even better.

Here's the clincher. When I opened my copy of Electronic Gaming Monthly, the magazine fell open to a drawing of a yellow school bus mounted with giant missiles. It was an ad for "Vigilante 8," a video game starring a boy named Molo: "Kicked out of school for poor citizenship, Molo's lookin' to get his 'A' in automotive ass-whuppin'!"

And we wonder where kids get such crazy ideas in their heads.

By comparison, Joe Camel looks more innocuous than Barney. And I start to wonder: Am I nuts here, or what? We happily blame an animated camel for ruining the health of all Americans, but we embrace companies that root for violence?

Video-game company executives aren't stupid. They know that a game where you can rip people's heads off and pull the spinal cords out of their bodies is a much hotter seller with the kids than one of those woozy problem-solving games. These kinds of marketing smarts drove \$5.5 billion in video-game sales last year. They'll spur this year's sale of at least 30 million video-game con-

soles, up from 6 million just two years ago.

Jon Davison, editor in chief of Electronic Gaming Monthly, says he doesn't review ads before publication and doesn't plan to start. However, he did concede, "Video-game advertising can get a bit over the top."

The man at Activision with final approval of the "Vigilante 8" ad campaign is Eric Johnson, senior VP of marketing. Johnson could've revised the ad about Molo, the expelled student seeking revenge, after the random mass shootings at schools in Mississippi. Or Kentucky. Arkansas. Pennsylvania. Tennessee. Oregon. He didn't.

"It never even crossed my mind," he said.

Activision has never received any complaints for its games — and for good reason, since the games are just pure fantasy escapism, Johnson said. "We're not trying to save the whales here. We're entertaining people for an economical price."

King County Executive Ron Sims said this community can't afford to invest more millions in jails for juveniles — but if we don't aggressively intervene within the next two years, we'll have no choice, he added. "We can either lose the next generation, or we can intervene."

Intervention often refers to counseling, after-school programs or alternative sentencing. But to rely solely on structured programs is a copout. True intervention means extracting harmful things from kids' lives, or at least taking a stand against them. This is hard to do, because it would require us to swallow the bloated notion of tolerance we've been choking on for over a decade.

At an annual video-game convention in Atlanta earlier this month, the president of Interactive Digital Software Industry denied any connection between school shooting sprees and video games. "There is no link, it's just games," he said.

Maybe he's right. Maybe Joe Camel was the only villain worth fighting. And maybe kids should read magazines and play games that glorify violence and torture; games where heroes slip on the entrails of their victims. Maybe we just need to lighten up a bit.

But 8-year-old Arthur Sawe doesn't think so.

Susan Nielsen's column appears regularly on editorial pages of The Times. Her e-mail address is: [sunielsen@seattletimes.com](mailto:sunielsen@seattletimes.com)

# Game Makers, Taking Hits, Try To Shield Kids

By DEAN TAKAHASHI

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Hoping to avert a regulatory crack down, the video-game industry says it is trying to strengthen voluntary measures to shield children from inappropriate games.

The recent spate of teen violence has prompted legislators to target video-game makers nationwide. The U.S. Senate has authorized a study on the effects of violent games and music on young people, and legislators in four states have already proposed making it illegal to sell games rated "mature" to minors.

Responding, the game publishers' lobbying group, the Interactive Digital Software Association, has begun working with retailers to develop a voluntary system that would essentially "card" potential game buyers. When any adult-rated title is scanned into a cash register, the system would alert the retailer to ask for identification. If the buyer is a minor without parental permission, the clerk could deny the sale. Retailers hope to begin using the system first in Washington state, and eventually plan to deploy it nationally.

How effective that would be is questionable, since critics say retailers are lax when it comes to enforcement. In a study last year, a Minneapolis advocacy group called the National Institute on Media and the Family found that 41% of retail clerks didn't understand the ratings, and only 40% of parents reported routinely checking ratings. When the institute surveyed fourth through eighth graders, half named violent games as their favorites. It also found that while video stores accounted for \$800 million in game revenue last year, only 9% of them refused to rent mature titles to minors.

Meanwhile, there are virtually no curbs to prevent minors from anonymously downloading violent titles from Internet game sites.

Rapid growth of video games has increased the industry's visibility. Last year, electronic-game sales in North America grew 25%, to \$5.5 billion—not far behind the \$6.9 billion in movie box-office receipts. In its first six weeks last Christmas, one game, Nintendo Co.'s "Legend of Zelda," generated \$150 million in sales, outpacing the film "A Bug's Life," which pulled in \$114 million during the same time at the box office.

"As our industry has become so large, we are a fair target for criticism," says Peter Main, executive vice president at Nintendo of America. "The level of concern is greater than ever before, especially on Capitol Hill," says Doug Lowenstein, IDSA president. "More needs to be done with the rating system and ad codes."

As with the movie and music industries,  
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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL TUESDAY, MAY 25, 1999

# Video-Game Firms Step Up Self-Policing

*Continued From Page B1*

video-game makers have a voluntary ratings system, but it is relatively new and largely ignored. A postage-stamp-size logo appears on game covers categorizing titles as Adults Only, Mature, Teen, Everyone or Early Childhood. Industry experts say so-called "violent shooter" titles—like "Doom," "Quake," "Sin," and "Half-Life"—make up only 6% of the sales of the entire gaming market. All are rated Mature.

Store operators say they aren't the problem. "Retailers should pay attention to the ratings," says Pamela Rucker, a spokeswoman for the National Retail Federation in Washington, but "parents need to know what their children are playing."

The industry's Mr. Lowenstein says research connecting violence and game-playing is thin. Roughly 57% of video games are played by adults, and the industry's fastest-growing sector is children's puzzle and board games, like Monopoly. Of 5,000 games rated by the industry's Entertainment Software Ratings Board in the past five years, 70% were considered appropriate for all ages to play.

Still, it's the violent titles that have gaming companies under attack. After the December 1997 school shooting in Paducah, Ky., families of three victims sued makers of violent games, as well as movie studios, for allegedly influencing the killer.

Washington state is a hotbed of activity. In Olympia, the Washington Retailers Association has agreed to encourage electronic game retailers to voluntarily prohibit sales of violent games to minors

throughout the state.

That plan follows a campaign by a Seattle group called Mothers Against Violence, which started its advocacy work last year when one member's eight-year-old son saw an ad in Electronic Gaming Monthly. The ad, for Activision Inc.'s "Vigilante 8," pictured a school bus armed with missiles and featured "Molo," an expelled student aiming to get an "A" in violent acts. Activision declined to comment.

The video-game trade group says it also plans to tone down such violence references in ads. Last year, Interplay Entertainment Inc. advertised a car-combat game, "Carmageddon," with the caption "Easier than killing babies with axes." The ad outraged children's advocacy groups. In the aftermath, Interplay says it will be "more careful" about its ads and enlarge the warning labels on its adult-oriented games.

While denying any connection between violence and game-playing, some publishers and retailers themselves are taking steps to limit access to violent titles. Some retailers, for instance, recently balked at carrying Interactive Magic Inc.'s "Mortyr," a game whose cover depicted a black Nazi helmet in a pool of blood.

And recently, Electronic Arts Inc. nixed "Thrill Kill," a violent game it inherited when it acquired another company. Glenn Fong, head of the company's Canada studios, said, "We even killed the project altogether so someone else couldn't publish it."

But some people worry that overreacting to recent tragic events could limit the

industry's artistic freedom. "It's scary that the violence issue has become political," says Mike Wilson, chief executive officer of Gathering of Developers LLC, a Dallas company that has a number of violent games in the works. "A big retailer could very well get a lot of PR out of saying they won't sell violent games."

Fans of violent shooting games say their appeal is more about using one's wits than about gore. "We make the games that we like to play," says John Carmack, co-founder of Id Software Inc. and developer of the upcoming Quake III. "It's not for kids."

An online survey, just released by market researcher PC Data Inc. in Reston, Va., found that nearly 19% of respondents said the government should impose minimum age restrictions to buy violent games.

Parents struggle with that same issue. Istok Stajner, a 37-year-old Web site master in San Jose, Calif., says it's hard to steer his 13-year-old stepson away from violent games when his friends play them and see them widely advertised in TV cartoons and in magazines. Enforcing game ratings on sales to minors would help, Mr. Stajner says, but he adds, "Somehow, the kids would still get their hands on the games."

He adds: "I can't make the games into forbidden fruit. All I can do is talk now and then, and stress how violence in real life is not a fun thing."

**WSJ Journal Link:** Join an online discussion about the issue of violence in video games in The Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition at <http://wsj.com>