

Ramsey Clark Urges Senators to Support the Registration of Firearms

By JOHN W. FINNEY

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WASHINGTON, June 26—Attorney General Ramsey Clark told a Senate subcommittee today that Congress would be failing in its responsibility to check crime if it did not include registration and licensing of firearms in a gun control bill. Testifying before the Senate Juvenile Delinquency Subcommittee, he provided the most emphatic statement yet from the Administration on the need to include these two controls in the gun legislation being considered by Congress.

The National Rifle Association, meanwhile, registered with Congress its emphatic opposition to the new gun controls being proposed by the Administration.

Harold W. Glassen, president of the association, told the subcommittee that a campaign was under way "to foist upon an unsuspecting and aroused public a law that would, through its operation, sound the death knell for the shooting sport and eventually disarm the American public."

The Administration, following the assassination of Senator Robert F. Kennedy, initially proposed legislation banning interstate mail order sales of rifles and shotguns.

On Monday, the White House proposed even more stringent controls, by requesting legislation requiring Federal registration of all firearms and licensing by either the states or the Federal Government of all gun owners.

The White House, however, has left somewhat unclear whether it wants Congress to include the registration and licensing controls in a package gun control bill or whether it

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would prefer that Congress act first and squarely on the mail order legislation.

But Mr. Clark left no doubt that he personally believed registration and licensing controls should be included in any gun bill.

The Attorney General's basic argument was that while the ban on interstate mail or-

ders would help stem the trafficking in firearms, it would not inhibit the criminal use of firearms or help directly in crime prevention.

A similar argument was presented to the subcommittee by Mayor Lindsay of New York and the former astronaut, John H. Glenn Jr. The latter testified as chairman of the newly formed Emergency Committee for Gun Control.

Testifying before an overflow audience in the Senate's large Caucus Room, Mr. Clark said registration and licensing of firearms were "essential to comprehensive control."

The advantage of a Federal ban on interstate mail order sales, as described by Mr. Clark, is that this would provide a framework for states to adopt their own effective controls over the purchase or possession of firearms.

But registration, he said, would provide "a tremendous aid to law enforcement" in checking on guns in crimes and in "smoking out" criminals who possess guns illegally.

With licensing, he said, it would be easier to keep guns out of the hands of criminals, drug addicts, mental incompetents and alcoholics.

Committee to Meet

Under the Administration's proposal, no person would be able to purchase or possess a gun or ammunition without a license, which could be obtained only after a police department and a physician had attested that the person was qualified to possess a gun.

The question of whether to add registration and licensing controls to the Administration's bill will be taken up tomorrow when the full Senate Judiciary Committee meets. At that point, Senator Joseph D. Tydings, Democrat of Maryland, will offer registration and licensing amendments.

So closely divided is the judiciary committee that the outcome may depend upon whether Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, ends the mourning over the death of his brother and appears at the meeting to vote.

In his first public statement in the Senate since the death of his brother June 6, Senator Kennedy, in a letter to Senator Thomas J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, the subcommittee chairman, said that passage of a strong and effective Federal gun law is "long overdue."

He made clear that he supported both registration and licensing of firearms.

Delay Is Sought

As the showdown approached,

the opposition resorted to delaying tactics, contending that there had been insufficient hearings on registration and licensing controls for the committee to consider such legislation.

At one point, Senator Strom Thurmond, Republican of South Carolina, cut off the subcommittee hearings, which had been scheduled to run throughout the day, by objecting to a meeting while the Senate was in session.

Under the rules of the Senate, his objection forced a recess in the hearing, with several witnesses unheard.

Senator Roman L. Hruska, Republican of Nebraska, leader of the opposition to stronger

controls, complained that the Senate committee was being forced to make "a snap judgment overnight" on legislation submitted only yesterday by the Administration and warned against "sacrificing the merit and propriety of legislation to the expediency of speed."

Sheldon S. Cohen, director of the Internal Revenue Service, estimated that it would require \$25-million to establish the registration system, with its planned computers, and about \$22-million a year to operate.

In arguing for stronger controls, Colonel Glenn, a friend of Senator Kennedy's, recalled how it had been his "awful duty" to tell six children of the Senator that their father had been killed.

"We simply cannot permit such senseless killing to continue," he said. "We must do all we can to prevent those who should not have guns from getting them."

Colonel Glenn said that the Emergency Committee, composed of prominent citizens,

took the position that at the minimum an "effective" bill must contain registration and licensing as well as a ban on interstate sales.

Without these three key provisions, he said, any legislation "would fail to provide the American people with the safeguards so badly needed to control the unchecked flow and the irresponsible use of guns."

He twitted the National Rifle Association for opposing stronger gun controls. Noting that as a teen-ager he had taken one of the association's courses in marksmanship, which stressed responsibility and safety in the use of guns, he said he was "surprised that the N.R.A. would not be as insistent in fostering controls that would make guns less of a menace in this country."

Mayor Lindsay argued that Federal regulations were necessary to make effective state and local gun controls.

"As long as the escaped criminal or mental patient or addict can obtain a firearm by

crossing a bridge or mailing an order, no state or local government can protect its residents adequately," he said.

In response to a question by Senator Tydings, the Mayor said that if Congress failed to enact registration and licensing controls, this would make New York City's job of controlling guns "immensely more difficult."



Senator Edward W. Brooke, left, Massachusetts Republican, and John H. Glenn Jr., chairman of the Emergency Committee for Gun Control, before they testified at the hearing.



Mayor Lindsay and Senator Joseph D. Tydings, Maryland Democrat, confer during hearing

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