

PRESIDENT SEEKS HARSH PENALTIES TO CURB BOMBERS

Asks Death for Any Who Kill by Explosives—Requests Wide U.S. Jurisdiction

Text of the Nixon statement on explosives is on Page 24.

By JAMES M. NAUGHTON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 25—

President Nixon asked Congress today to stem "an alarming increase in the number of criminal bombings in the cities of our country" by setting severe penalties, including capital punishment, for illegal use of explosives.

The President called for broad Federal jurisdiction over bombings and bomb threats but said it would be used only "when necessary in the public interest."

In a statement issued at the White House, Mr. Nixon contended that recent bombings were "the work of political fanatics" who must be dealt with as the "potential murderers they are."

Wide Coverage Planned

The most controversial among nine remedies sought by the President was a plea for Federal jurisdiction over illegal use of explosives on property used in interstate commerce "or in any activity affecting such commerce."

Richard G. Kleindienst, the Deputy Attorney General, said at a White House news conference that "almost every commercial establishment in the United States" would be covered by Mr. Nixon's proposed legislation. It also would stiffen penalties for bombings and bomb threats involving Federal property.

The President did not call for registration of individual sticks of dynamite, as mayor Lindsay of New York urged last week. Nor did Mr. Nixon's proposals offer more than the hope that increased penalties and Federal powers would prove to be a deterrent to the growing number of bombings and bomb

threats.

Stiff Penalties Asked

Mr. Kleindienst said the proposals were "calculated" to reduce the level of bombings to the number expected under "normal circumstances."

In legislation sent separately to Capitol Hill by the Justice Department, Mr. Nixon asked that "Molotov cocktails, home-made bombs composed of gas-filled bottles with cloth wicks, be included in the category of explosives covered by existing anti-bombing laws."

The President urged that the present penalties of as much as one year in prison or \$1,000 fine be increased tenfold for the transport of explosives with the intent to use them illegally. If an injury occurred,

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the penalties he proposed would rise to 20 years and \$20,000 and, in the event of a fatality, could bring a death sentence.

Punishment for a bomb threat should be raised, Mr. Nixon said, from one year in prison to five years or a fine of \$5,000.

"The anarchic and criminal elements who perpetrate such acts deserve no more patience or indulgence," the President said. "It is time to deal with them for what they are."

The Justice Department acted swiftly in drawing up the legislation. The White House said Mr. Nixon requested it only 12 days earlier, after he became concerned about a rash of bombings and bomb threats that included the Greenwich Village townhouse explosion in which three persons died, bombing incidents in three Manhattan buildings and disruptions from telephoned threats in a number of buildings in New York, Washington and elsewhere.

Warning in '68 Campaign

The request for broad Federal jurisdiction appeared to run counter to a theme of Mr. Nixon's campaign for the Presidency in 1968. He cautioned then against increasing Federal control over law enforcement matters, saying such things as direct grants to local police departments could open the door to "the possibility of a Federal police force—a prospect we should avoid."

Mr. Nixon emphasized today that Federal investigations and prosecutions in bombing cases on private property "would begin only after the Attorney General had determined that intervention by the national Government is necessary in public interest."

In practice, officials of the

Justice Department said, that would mean the Attorney General or one of his designated aides would have to decide in each case whether the situation warranted Federal intervention.

The President said his aim was to assist local officials in combating "the multiplying number of acts of urban terror."

Mr. Kleindienst told reporters he had "no meaningful information in an absolute sense" to document the scope of the problem.

The White House press secretary, Ronald L. Ziegler, said later that there had been 164 bomb threats since last July 1, 106 of them since December, that involved Federal property.

Compared to Total of 46

He said that compared to 46 threats during all of the preceding 12 months. Incidents of bombing or arson on Federal property totaled 14 during the last nine months, as against 13 during the previous year, Mr. Ziegler said.

The Deputy Attorney General said there was no evidence available to show that the bombings across the country were part of a "conscious, clear, precise conspiracy."

But he said it was possible to go on almost "any campus in the United States" and pick up information on how to make a bomb.

Asked for specifics on the campuses where this was true,

Mr. Kleindienst said he believed it to be correct "just based on the information mailed to me by citizens and groups."

Mr. Kleindienst said that the public and news media were aware "there are persons in our society who seek to destroy our Government by violent means."

The legal basis for Mr. Nixon's proposals is the Government's authority to regulate interstate commerce. In recent years, with the enactment of civil rights legislation on public accommodations and housing, the Federal authority has been interpreted broadly, to cover even business activity remotely related to interstate commerce.

Existing Federal penalties for illegal use of explosives or threatened use were enacted in 1960 after a series of incidents involving civil rights workers in the South.

TEXT



Text of Nixon's Statement

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, March 25 —Following is the text of a statement issued today by President Nixon proposing legislation to deal with criminal bombings and bomb threats:

Recent months have brought an alarming increase in the number of criminal bombings in the cities of our country. In recent weeks the situation has become particularly acute, as telephoned threats and actual bombings have sent fear through many American communities.

Schools and public buildings have had to be evacuated; considerable property has been destroyed; lives have been lost. Clearly, many of these bombings have been the work of political fanatics, many of them young criminals posturing as romantic revolutionaries. They must be dealt with as the potential murderers they are.

Under existing law, the transport of explosives across state lines is, under some circumstances, a Federal crime. I am proposing an extensive strengthening and expansion of that law. In the proposals being sent to the Congress, it is asked that:

¶Anyone involved in the transport or receipt in commerce of explosives, intending their unlawful use, be made subject to imprisonment for 10 years or a fine of \$10,000 or both. The current maximum penalty is a single year in prison or a \$1,000 fine or both.

¶The maximum penalty be doubled to 20 years in prison or a \$20,000 fine or both if anyone is injured as the ultimate result of such transport of explosives.

¶Penalties for bomb threats be raised from one year in prison to a maximum of five years or \$5,000 fine or both.

¶Incendiary devices be included in the category of "explosives," bringing such devices under the anti-bombing provisions.

¶Use of explosives to damage or destroy any building, vehicle or other property owned or leased to the Federal Government be made a Federal crime.

¶Possession, without written authorization, of any explosive in such a building be made a Federal crime.

¶Use of explosives to damage or destroy any building or property used for business purposes by any person or firm engaged in interstate commerce, or in any activity affecting such commerce, be made a Federal crime.

¶Possession of explosives with the intent to damage either Federal property or property used in its business by a person engaged in interstate commerce also be made a Federal crime.

¶The individual engaged in the transport or use of explosives in violation of these provisions be made subject to the death penalty if a fatality occurs.

Our purpose in bringing these crimes under Federal jurisdiction is not to displace state or local authority. Federal investigations and prosecutions would begin only after the Attorney General had determined that intervention by the national Government is necessary in the public interest.

Our purpose is rather to assist state and local governments in their efforts to combat the multiplying number of acts of urban terror. I am also asking that Law Enforcement Assistance Administration funds be specifically designated for special training programs for state and local law enforcement agencies to aid them in coping with this latest threat to the public safety and the maintenance of a free and open society.

The anarchic and criminal elements who perpetrate such acts deserve no more patience or indulgence. It is time to deal with them for what they are.