

**REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT:
COMBATTING VIOLENT CRIME IN
CHICAGO PUBLIC HOUSING**



Henry Cisneros
Secretary of Housing
and Urban Development

April 15, 1994

Combatting Violent Crime in
Chicago Public Housing

April 15, 1994

In response to the escalation of violence and the prevalence of firearms in Chicago public housing, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development traveled to Chicago on April 10-11 to devise a strategy for combatting crime in public housing. The Secretary met with elected officials, leadership of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA), public housing residents, law enforcement personnel, and community leaders and conducted an assessment of the security needs of Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway. These two Chicago public housing developments have been besieged by gang warfare over the past several weeks.

Upon his return, the Secretary conferred with the Attorney General on what short- and long-term actions could be taken by the federal government, in close collaboration with local public and private actors, to help stabilize the explosive situation in Chicago's public housing developments.

This memorandum identifies \$28.8 million in HUD and Justice resources that can immediately be made available for additional enforcement and prevention measures in Chicago's developments. \$20.65 million will come from reprogramming CHA's existing unobligated funds; \$8.15 million will be new money.

Federal funds will be used to hire additional police for specialized units, replace private security guards, suppress illegal gun trafficking, reduce excessive vacancies, and expand tenant patrols. Federal funds will also be used to reconstruct playgrounds, support midnight basketball, boys and girls clubs and other recreational efforts, expand drug rehabilitation efforts and repair and expand after-school centers.

The provision of these resources will be made contingent on local participation to ensure effective implementation of these immediate measures as well as integration of law enforcement, social services, public health, education and other relevant efforts.

HUD will also work with CHA leadership on an innovative plan to demolish the troubled high-rises and transition to a different type of public housing -- one that is economically integrated, small scale, well designed and safe and secure. The Department will propose a series of initiatives in its 1994 legislation to support this long-term vision.

Enforcement Measures

1. B.I.T.E. Teams

The CHA police and the Chicago police have established an innovative anti-crime effort called B.I.T.E. -- Building Interdiction Team Effort. A B.I.T.E. team consists of the following:

- 8 public housing officers
- 8 Chicago police officers
- 1 public housing sergeant
- 1 Chicago police sergeant

The goal of the teams is to "win back control" of selected buildings from the gangs. B.I.T.E. teams are being used to secure the perimeters of buildings and then patrol and search common areas and vacant apartments, challenge suspicious persons and inspect occupied apartments when they receive tenant consent.

An expanded B.I.T.E. force can provide the personnel and expertise to secure buildings and conduct lawful searches for firearms. Federal funding to support the use of such teams can be effective in breaking the gang's stranglehold over some of the most crime-infested buildings, and in restoring tenants' confidence that CHA and local police have the capacity and the will to protect the inhabitants of the buildings from gang violence.

Response: HUD will provide CHA with \$10 million to fund 10 additional B.I.T.E. teams. Funds will be drawn half from the public housing modernization emergency program and half from CHA's own unobligated modernization funds.

The Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) will assist the B.I.T.E. program by providing approximately \$500,000 for its enhancement and expansion.

2. Replacing Private Security ("Rent-A-Cops")

CHA currently employs private security personnel to act as guards in public housing buildings. Observers have criticized this practice on a number of grounds: lack of adequate supervision and accountability, lack of training, unclear mission. CHA recommends supplanting these private security forces with CHA housing police.

Response: HUD will permit CHA to reprogram \$5 million from its unobligated modernization account to fund replacements for private security forces.

3. Coordination of Law Enforcement Agencies

Federal, state and local law enforcement agencies are working collaboratively on a range of initiatives to address violent crime in public and assisted housing.

HUD, Justice, the Department of Treasury, and the Office of National Drug Control Policy have established the Operation Safe Home initiative to combat fraud and violent crime in designated public and assisted housing. The initiative coordinates federal and local law enforcement efforts in a broad range of enforcement and prevention matters.

In addition, HUD recently joined the Mayor's task force on violence in public housing known as CHANGE, which stands for Chicago Housing Authority Neighborhood Gang Enforcement. Under CHANGE representatives of the FBI, ATF, DEA, U.S. Marshals Service, State Police, Chicago Police and Chicago housing police have participated in coordinated sweeps of targeted public housing sites armed with arrest and search warrants for drug dealing and other offenses. Most of those arrested are prosecuted by the Cook County State's Attorney, which has nearly a 95% conviction rate resulting from these arrests.

Response: Request that the United States Attorney in Chicago give priority to developing, as part of Operation Safe Home and the Anti-Violent Crime strategy in his community, a coordinated federal-state-local response to the alarmingly high level of armed violence at Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway.

HUD will participate fully in meetings of the CHANGE task force in an effort to provide meaningful guidance and assistance to the shaping of strategies in Chicago to combat violent crime in public housing.

4. Gun Trafficking

In the current environment, the trafficking of firearms in Chicago's public housing developments is rampant and unimpeded by any sustained, coordinated effort by federal and local enforcement officials. Many of those weapons that are illegally bought and sold in and around the projects are promptly put to criminal use.

Response: BJA will make available \$200,000 to undertake a suppression program to discourage illegal trafficking in firearms and their use in the commission of crimes. This program may include investigation and prosecution of gun traffickers, those who illegally possess firearms, and those who use firearms in the commission of a crime. BJA will work with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms on

this effort.

5. Vacancy Reduction

Excessive vacancies represent a significant security problem for CHA. In some developments, they have become a haven for gangs to stash weapons and drugs. In some buildings, gangs have literally broken through walls dividing separate apartments -- a practice called "tunnelling" -- enabling gangs to control large segments of floors.

Management personnel are constantly at risk; gangs control exit and entry in many buildings. Work is constantly disrupted; crews return some mornings to find partially rehabilitated apartments destroyed.

CHA is taking a series of innovative steps to reduce vacancies in their developments. The construction trades are training residents to rehabilitate vacant apartments under a new HUD program called Step-Up. Homeless veterans are "house-sitting" and fixing up vacant apartments, getting preferential treatment for future apartments in return.

Response: HUD will permit CHA to reprogram \$10 million in unobligated public housing modernization funds for purposes of rehabilitating vacant apartments in Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway. This reprogramming will be approved in anticipation of CHA receiving Vacancy Reduction funds later in fiscal year 1994.

HUD will also provide CHA with technical assistance in designing a "round-the-clock" rehabilitation program to combat the random destruction of unfinished work.

HUD will work with CHA and local construction trades to expedite implementation of the expanded Step-Up program.

CHA would also change the way it carries out maintenance responsibilities under this plan. Each building under the vacancy program could, for example, establish a newly established maintenance management system that implements performance standards for all maintenance and renovation staff.

6. Tenant Patrols

CHA has helped organize and fund tenant patrols in about half of the buildings in Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway. These patrols supplement the efforts performed by Chicago police and local housing police. The cost of starting up a tenant patrol is approximately \$8,000 per building.

Response: HUD will permit CHA to reprogram \$150,000 in unobligated public housing modernization funds for purposes of initiating tenant patrols in the remaining buildings in these targeted developments. Funds will be used to cover a range of activities, including training and equipment.

7. Strategic Planning

An effective anti-crime strategy must operate on a number of levels. It requires sufficient numbers of well-trained police; adequate prevention strategies; resident involvement; community outreach efforts; and the integration of other public and private resources.

Response: BJA will work with the City of Chicago to help support the development of a comprehensive strategy to address violent crime, especially centered on the Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway. In tandem with an ongoing project entitled the Comprehensive Communities Program, this effort will involve helping the City to define its violence problems and to develop effective strategies to address them.

Prevention Measures

1. Playground Reconstruction

The playground facilities in Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway are in abysmal condition: strewn with glass, needles and other drug paraphernalia. Reconstruction of adequate, secure ballfields, "green space" and other playground facilities needs to happen immediately. Progress is being made; the corporate and philanthropic community as well as the state government are expected to rehabilitate a playground at a local high school.

Response: HUD will permit CHA to reprogram \$300,000 in unobligated public housing modernization funds for purposes of rehabilitating playground facilities that are on the grounds of Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway.

2. Recreational Activities

CHA has successfully administered a range of recreational activities to offer an alternative to gang life for public housing youth. CHA has particularly requested additional funding for their midnight basketball program. The House crime bill would authorize \$50 million for midnight sports leagues. Yet appropriations for this initiative would not be made until the fall; funding awards might not be made until winter. CHA estimates that approximately \$200,000 is needed to administer a program this summer.

Response: HUD will permit CHA to reprogram \$200,000 in unobligated public housing modernization funds for purposes of administering a midnight basketball program in Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway.

3. Drug Rehabilitation

CHA has designed and implemented in other developments a program called CADRE -- Combatting Alcohol and Drugs through Rehabilitation and Education. The program provides a range of prevention, intervention and treatment services for residents. CHA estimates that it would cost approximately \$300,000 to implement the program in Robert Taylor Homes.

Response: The Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Assistance will provide CHA with \$300,000 to expand CADRE to Robert Taylor Homes. The funds will be transferred from the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

4. Other Services

CHA identified a range of other services needed to address the root causes and effects of the violence in Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway. These services include: counseling for young children, victim assistance programs, summer cultural activities, support for boys and girls clubs and after-school programs, truancy reduction measures and other support services.

Response: HUD will provide CHA \$2 million in Family Investment Center funds to rehabilitate CHA and adjoining facilities for purposes of providing support services to residents. Up to \$300,000 of this award may be used to fund directly a range of support services, including the services identified above.

BJA will provide \$150,000 to establish Boys and Girls Clubs in these targeted developments. Funds will provide these funds through its current Cooperative Agreement with Boys and Girls Clubs of America.

Long Term Measures

Robert Taylor Homes, Stateway and other developments comprise 65 highrise buildings along State Street in South Chicago. These buildings warehouse 23,000 of the nation's poor in dense, ill-designed environments, with average incomes around \$5400.

The efforts described above will hopefully stabilize the situation in Robert Taylor Homes and Stateway over the next several months. Yet more radical measures are needed if this housing is to become safe and livable and if the tenants residing

in the developments are to become working, productive citizens.

Vince Lane, Chairman of CHA, has a vision that would virtually "change the landscape" of Chicago by demolishing these high-rises and rebuilding in their place small-scale, well-designed, economically integrated housing.

To accomplish Chairman Lane's vision, HUD and Congress will need to dramatically transform the way the public housing program works. Three revisions are most critical.

Public housing agencies should be given the flexibility to use modernization funds to demolish and replace dilapidated buildings. Currently, the CHA receives approximately over \$130 million a year in modernization funds. It must use those funds to rehabilitate existing developments whether or not demolition and replacement would be more costly and effective.

Public housing agencies should be allowed to capitalize a portion of the expected modernization funding stream — as is done with Community Development Block Grant Funds. CHA could potentially leverage hundreds of millions in dollars under a proposal which would permit a PHA to capitalize a portion of its modernization grant.

Public housing agencies should be allowed to leverage public housing funds with such resources as bond financing and other public and private sources of capital. The ability to leverage non-Federal funds will permit PHAs to stimulate the development of mixed income communities.

Response: HUD will include the modernization revisions in HUD's 1994 legislation and implement the leveraging proposals administratively.