

# The Miami Herald

## NATIONAL NEWS

### Clinton hails donation of 50,000 cellular phones for crime watch

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WASHINGTON — Any neighborhood watch group in America can get a free cellular telephone to help it fight crime.

"Now, when drug dealers wear pagers and gang members have cell phones, I think it's time we put high technology on the side of law and order," President Clinton said Wednesday at a ceremony designed to burnish his election-year credentials both as a crime-fighter and as a leader who relies upon citizen action as well as upon the government to improve society.

Under the Communities on Phone Patrol (COPP) program, some 50,000 free cell phones will be donated initially to citizen-patrol groups by the Cellular Telecommunications Industry Association, a trade group, which made the grant in response to an appeal this spring from Clinton.

The donation costs the taxpayers nothing. The CTIA pledged to provide free air time for the phones, and to provide additional phones as needed.

Users will be able to call only the numbers that will be preprogrammed by local law enforcement officials. The idea is that any citizen patrollers stumbling upon suspicious circumstances or an emergency could call for help immediately.

Clinton said citizen watch groups using cell phones have scored remarkable success in reducing crime in many areas. "In Dade County, Fla., the citizens with cell phones are helping to bring down burglaries, robberies and thefts," the president said.

White House documents cited a study from Florida International University, crediting citizen phone patrols with helping to cut Dade burglaries by 33 percent, robberies by 24 percent and thefts by 9 percent.

Distribution of phones will be coordinated by the Community Policing Consortium of leading law enforcement organizations. The CPC will provide an application form starting Aug. 9. Local police or sheriffs will have to approve any group's application before it is forwarded to CPC.

#### GETTING PHONES

##### Neighborhood groups

seeking cellular phones should contact their local police. Or they can reach the Community Policing Consortium at 1726 M St., NW, Suite 801, Washington, D.C. 20036. Phone: (800) 833-3085.