

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
TO THE  
WOMEN'S BASKETBALL TEAM  
FROM THE  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

THE ROSE GARDEN

10:45 A.M. EST

On this very beautiful day, the day before we leave for the People's Republic of China, it is a special privilege for me to meet the basketball team that is representing the People's Republic of China.

When Mrs. Ford and I were in the People's Republic of China in 1972 we visited a good many areas in China, including Liaoning Province, Shenyang, Anshan, as well as Peking and Canton. Every place we went we saw more basketball courts than even in the United States.

I predicted then that we would have in the United States some very rugged competition on the basketball court, both the men as well as women. We saw young boys and girls at a very early age learning to play basketball with small balls and lowered backboards.

I am sure that this fine team from the People's Republic will do very well in competition against our American teams. I understand there is a game tonight out at the Federal City College. I wish it was possible for me to attend but I will look forward to reading the results in the paper tomorrow morning.

The visit of these fine young ladies from the People's Republic is another step in the normalization of relations between our country and the People's Republic. I strongly believe that cultural exchanges, educational exchanges, competition in athletics are all important in trying to expand this normalization of relations between the two countries.

I am looking forward to the trip beginning tomorrow morning to visit again the People's Republic of China. It is a trip of great significance -- it will be another step in the effort on the part of the two Governments to expand our relations and to broaden the normalization.

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It is vital from our point of view that this dialogue, these discussions continue, and I am looking forward to the trip, as I know the Secretary of State is, and Mrs. Ford and Susan and I are most anxious to have the opportunity of visiting your country.

We welcome you to the United States. We know that you will be warmly received.

I know the contests will be good. I am a little prejudiced as to who I hope might win.

Thank you very much for coming to the White House. I understand you are visiting the White House after this brief meeting here. We welcome you to the Residence and wish you well on your trip throughout the United States.

I might make two other comments: I mentioned earlier that I had noticed how many basketball courts there were, beginning with smaller ones. I made the comment to Mrs. Ford that I was certain that out of 800 million people I was positive there would be developed a Chinese Wilt Chamberlain. I also tried a little ping pong with some of the very able Chinese ping pong players and I quit after about the first exchange.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to shaking hands and meeting all of you.

Thank you again.

END (AT 10:53 A.M. EST)