

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DECEMBER 8, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
WITH THE PRESIDENT

ABOARD AIR FORCE ONE

1:52 A.M. EST

QUESTION: Mr. President, at the end of this trip, as you look back, what were the highlights for you? What do you think was the most important thing that came out of it?

THE PRESIDENT: Barbara, every stop we made, whether it was Alaska, which was significant in seeing what the pipeline was doing or how it was progressing; and China, of course, where we had very extensive substantive meetings which I thought were extremely beneficial; or whether it was Indonesia, where I had an opportunity to talk in some detail and depth with President Suharto; whether it was the Philippines, where we had not only a meaningful meeting, but we had a very pleasant time; or whether it was Hawaii, where the opportunity to go to the ARIZONA and subsequently to the East-West Center, it seemed to me that everything fitted in extremely well. There were no minuses and many, many plusses.

QUESTION: There will inevitably, Mr. President, be some criticism -- those who will say that you wasted time and energy and that a lot of this could have been accomplished by someone below you or by meetings closer to home.

How do you answer that criticism?

THE PRESIDENT: Barbara, we worked a good many hours. I was in constant contact with people in Washington -- in fact, I called several people from Peking -- involving the legislative situation to determine with the Republican legislative leaders what we ought to do in reference to the tax bill.

So, it was not only work on foreign policy, which was very significant, but it also gave us a chance to keep in good contact with the people back in Washington on domestic matters.

MORE

QUESTION: But did you, yourself, have to go? Were they the kinds of meetings that demanded the President of the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: Barbara, I think the discussions we had in Peking were mandatory at my level, and the discussions also with President Suharto and President Marcos were likewise discussions that could only be carried on by the heads of Government.

So, if you look at it that way and the importance of the discussions in all three countries, yes, it was extremely important and essential that I participate.

QUESTION: Mr. President, we are all exhausted. How do you do it? What are they feeding you?

THE PRESIDENT: I enjoy the work, for one thing, and I really get stimulated by the challenge in every place we go, so it is one of those things that just keeps you going because it is necessary and challenging.

QUESTION: What time are you going to be in the office today?

THE PRESIDENT: I will probably be there reasonably early, but not as early as normal.

QUESTION: We hear that you may go to the Middle East next, Mr. President. Are there any plans?

THE PRESIDENT: There are no definite plans, Helen.

QUESTION: The word "definite." That is what is throwing us off.

THE PRESIDENT: We probably will at some point. It, of course, is an area of tremendous importance not only to the United States, but to many other countries, including those in the Middle East, but at the present time we have no specific plans for any trip overseas at all.

QUESTION: Things are looking better now with Brezhnev to come here, perhaps, or a break in SALT?

THE PRESIDENT: We are going to hold some very important meetings with the NSC within the next week or ten days and, of course, those meetings will determine to a substantial degree what we can do, if anything.

We certainly are of the same mind today as we have been in the past at a SALT II agreement, if mutual, that in its responsibilities is in the best interests of the United States, as well as the rest of the world.

MORE

Page 3

It is really nice to see you all. Thank you.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Mr. President.

END (AT 2:01 A.M. EST)