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THE WHITE HOUSE
REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

GREGG COUNTY AIRPORT
LONGVIEW, TEXAS

10:09 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good evening.

QUESTION: Mr. Reagan says you are changing your policy in connection with Panama.

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think we have changed the policy at all. I may have been a little imprecise at one point, but we haven't changed the policy. Mr. Reagan wants to discontinue the negotiations and lead to more riots, more bloodshed, antagonizing 309 million South Americans and inevitably leading to doubling or tripling our military forces in Panama.

I think that is irresponsible. Our policy is the one of negotiation that will seek to maintain our operational, our defense capability in the Panamas and will, under no circumstances, give away anything involving our national security. I don't think that is an issue where we are going to lose. We are on the right side and he is on the wrong side.

QUESTION: Do you still think Mr. Humphrey may be your opponent?

THE PRESIDENT: I think to a large extent it depends on what happens in Pennsylvania and the word I got on the plane was that Carter was leading 36 to 26 over Jackson. If Carter wins in Pennsylvania, I don't see how the smoke-filled rooms and the Democratic Party can take it away from him.

QUESTION: Would you rather face Mr. Humphrey or Mr. Carter?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't really think it makes any difference. We will win in November anyhow.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, is the country ready for a woman Vice President as a candidate?

THE PRESIDENT: I think there could be a possibility of a woman Vice President. We have a lot of very talented women in this country, and I think it is premature to say what the Vice Presidential nominee might be. But, over 50 percent of the population are women, and so there must be a lot of talented gals that I think could qualify.

QUESTION: Mr. President, you are in beef country here in Texas at the present time. What about the possibility of limiting beef imports to the United States?

THE PRESIDENT: We are in the process right now, and have been for the last several months, of negotiating import quotas with the major countries that are traditionally the importers into the United States. We expect to get an agreement that I think will provide for a good trigger point, for good quota limitations and hopefully within the next few weeks or a month we ought to be able to achieve that, and I think that will protect our beef producers.

THE PRESS: Thank you.

END (10:15 P.M. CDT)