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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
AND  
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

LUBBOCK MUNICIPAL COLISEUM

12:50 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: Dr. Murray, Senator John Tower, Mr. Formby, Terry Wimmer, Reverend Clergy, students, faculty and guests at Texas Tech University:

First, let me say to you, Dr. Murray, when I was looking at the schedule anticipating the arrival here at Lubbock, I speculated that I would probably be coming in in a dust storm. (Laughter) But, I decided that it would be much better for me and for you if I brought some rain. (Laughter)

May I express my deepest appreciation and gratitude for the beautiful medal, which I will prize and cherish, and I thank all of you, not only Dr. Murray but the students and faculty and the Board of Trustees for this wonderful, tremendous welcome, as well as the very thoughtful gift. Thank you very, very much.

Quite frankly, I can't tell you how good it feels to be a part of big, friendly Lubbock, (Laughter) the home of the Texas Tech and the sensational Red Raiders. You know you have so much going for you here in Lubbock, I just wish I could stay long enough to see the Red Raiders game this afternoon, the rodeo tonight and your great Coaches of the Year, the All American Game on June 19, I would love to be here for that.

Before I go any further, to tell all you CBers out there, I bring a special hello from First Mama, and from First Papa, too.

I am looking forward to answering your questions, but as a starting point, let me tell you where I stand on two very vital issues for all Americans -- agriculture and national defense. As the State which produces more cotton, more cattle and more grain sorghum than any other, just to mention a few firsts, Texas has played a major part in one of the most successful farming years in America's history. In fact, the last two years have been the highest net farm income years in history, and that is a very tremendous record in America's history.

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I don't think it is mere coincidence that these very successful years have been years when the Government left the farmer alone. The Government let him produce without a lot of bureaucratic interference from the nation's capital.

I can promise you that that is the kind of successful farm policy that I intend to pursue for the next four years.

Today, we have no longer any heavy farm surpluses hanging over the farmers' market costing the Government \$1 million a day in storage fees. Instead of piling it up, we are selling grain at a record volume and let me assure you I am not going to use America's grain as a pawn in this country's foreign policy.

Farm policies and the hard work of American farmers yielded a \$21.8 billion agricultural support market last year, and it will be more than \$22 billion this year. We are working right now to increase it even more.

Those policies, that hard work, will enable the American farmer to export an estimated 47 million metric tons of feed grain, an all-time record in the current marketing year. This is a \$12 million more record than we exported last year and about \$7 million more than we exported in the previous record years of 1973 and 1974.

Our policies will enable the American farmer to export between 1.5 and 1.6 billion bushels of corn during this market year and between 250 and 300 million bushels of grain sorghum, another all-time record, and that is progress by any standard.

These are the policies which my Administration has followed for the past 21 months. They have succeeded, and we can make them even more successful in the next four years. But now let's turn very briefly to the subject of America's foreign policy and defense policy, where this Administration has put together a record of achievement that all Americans can view with pride and with confidence.

Today America is at peace. No American boys are in combat anywhere in the world, and I intend to keep it that way in the future.

We are meeting the active duty manpower requirements of the Joint Chiefs of Staff through an all-volunteer recruiting program without a draft.

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Throughout my 27 years in public life I have worked for, voted for the strongest possible military strength for America, and let me, if I might, give you some background.

Sometimes it is helpful to know whether a person has some experience, some know-how, some knowledge in a matter which he is talking about. Back in 1953, I was made a Member of what we in the House of Representatives call the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee. It happens to be the subcommittee that is chaired at the present time, and has been for a good many years, by your fine Congressman George Mahon.

I served on that committee for 14 years, and as George may have told you, from time to time that committee takes the Defense Department budget from the President of the United States, whomever it might be, and for five months a year, five days a week, five hours a day analyzes the testimony of Secretaries of Defense, Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretaries of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines, Admiral after Admiral, General after General, civilian in authority after another, and when we got through, after those long and extensive hearings, it probably amounted to about six volumes of 400 pages of testimony.

Every year we would make our recommendations to the House of Representatives for whatever the programs, policies would be for our country's national security, and then with the background of that information and that experience and that know-how, I think it has been a great asset for me to be able to sit down now as the Commander-in-Chief and discuss with the Chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations and the other top people, not talk about them with no background but with an in-depth information about what is right, what is wrong and what we should do and shouldn't do in national security matters.

But let me go on and say, since I became President, I recommended to the Congress the two largest military budgets in our Nation's history. They were needed to make certain that our military capabilities continue to be strong in the years ahead, as they must be if we are to find the peace and security that we all seek.

I am determined, as I have always been, to keep America's military might unsurpassed by any nation in this world.

You know, sometimes when I hear critics complaining about American defense policy and American foreign policy, always complaining but never offering any programs of their own, I am reminded of one of the finest Texans I ever had the privilege to know in the Congress of the United States.

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Sam Rayburn served 50 years in Washington. He had more years as Speaker of the House of Representatives than any person in the history of our great country. He served with over 3,000 Congressmen and Senators, eight different Presidents, and sometimes at the end of a long, long day, after Sam Rayburn had worked hard to make a better life for America, when he heard from the chronic complainers he loved to recall what his father, another fine Texan, once said, and I quote: "Any donkey can kick a barn down, but it takes an awfully good carpenter to build one up." And that is good advice when we are talking about some of our matters today.

Now as far as national security policies of the United States are concerned, I am convinced that the American people would rather have a President who is constructively working to build the foundations of lasting security than spends most of his time trying to kick them down.

We are at peace today and we enjoy the blessings of freedom in this great land because we are strong enough to keep the peace, to deter aggression and strong enough to protect our national security, and don't let anyone else tell you otherwise because it isn't true.

I know that in the course of a primary campaign you have heard one charge after another about how America is a second rate power, that we have lost our course, this great country, that we will have to turn the clock back to find America worth living in.

Well, frankly, I am sick and tired of people who run down the United States of America. I am very proud to be an American and I am proud of our country and I know that each and every one of you in this country feels precisely the same way.

I have, as I am sure you have, a deep, abiding faith in the goodness and in the greatness of America. I look to the future, as I am sure you do, not the past -- a future that we can fill with new glory and new achievement for the land that each and every one of us loves. That is my vision and I am sure it is your vision, and that is why I am asking for your support tomorrow, next November and in the four challenging years ahead.

Thank you very, very much.

Now I would be delighted to answer your questions.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask a question about our energy problem. As you know, measures directed toward energy conservation and energy independence have not, on the whole, been very successful, and we are today importing more oil than prior to the oil boycott.

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Our present energy conservation policy is largely an indirect one and lately an increasing number of people have been calling for a more direct and more effective policy; namely, legislation to prohibit the manufacture or importation of automobiles weighing over a certain amount -- say, 2,000 or 3,000 pounds -- and with engines which are larger than a certain size -- say, 150 to 200 cubic inches.

How do you feel about such direct and certainly very effective measures?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say, to verify what you have said, we are importing more foreign oil today than we did prior to the October War in the Middle East. At that time, we were importing about 30 or 31 percent of our total oil used. Today, we are importing 40 to 41 percent and it is going up as our domestic production goes down.

Now the specific question you ask -- should we ban the importation of foreign automobiles that would in effect use lesser amounts of gasoline per mile -- I think what we should do and what we are trying to do and what we are being successful in doing is forcing our American automobile producers to increase their gasoline utilization efficiency. As a matter of fact, when you compare the 1975 cars over the 1974 cars, they increased the efficiency about, as I recall, 8 to 9 percent, and then when they went to the 1976 models, which you are buying at the present time, they increased that efficiency over the 1975 about 13 percent. So the American automobile manufacturers are increasing their efficiency, which means more miles per gallon.

I think that any imported car, any imported car, must meet the same efficiency standards that we established for our American manufactured cars, and if they do, I don't think we should arbitrarily exclude them from American customers here in the United States. But they must meet those standards that our people have to meet and, if you will recollect, the energy bill that was passed in 1974, as I recollect, did mandate that the automobile industry in a period of five years had to increase its efficiency by 40 percent.

I am told, after talking with the manufacturers in Detroit, that they are going to meet or exceed that efficiency record, and I think we ought to compliment them and not condemn them.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, last year you signed the Helsinki agreement, which in effect has guaranteed the minority rule in 28 countries of Eastern Europe. Yet this week Henry Kissinger is traveling throughout Africa with all the might of the United States, asking for majority rule in Africa.

Now, is this a new policy since last year, or is this a Henry Kissinger agreement or something? Do we have two defense standards for different continents or different people? I don't understand it.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me correct the record as to what transpired as to Helsinki. There was no document signed by me or anybody else that said that those borders in the East or West of Europe are to be forever those borders. Nothing was signed in that agreement which makes those borders binding forever.

It says that those borders can be changed by peaceful change. That is what the document says. So anybody who alleges that we agreed to maintain those borders, period, for the rest of mankind, that is an inaccurate statement. The accurate statement is the one that I have given you.

Let me add one other point. We believe, this Administration believes that those Eastern European countries -- Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary -- all of them we want to be autonomous, we want them to be independent of any domination by any other country, including the Soviet Union.

I went to Poland, to Romania, to Yugoslavia just to be certain and positive that those people in those countries know that the United States wants to be independent, autonomous and free from domination by any other country. That is our policy in Western Europe. We want them to have the right of self-determination, which brings me to the policy of South America.

The history of this country is one of self-determination. We achieved our independence by self-determination. That is the historical concept that America has believed in in 200 years. We believe in self-determination. We believe, however, that in the process of self-determination we must absolutely guarantee the rights of the minorities in any country where they do have self-determination, and we will insist in that regard in Africa as we well have tried in other areas of the world.

Another part of our policy in South Africa is that we want to make certain that the Soviet Union and Cuba make no further advances than they have in Angola. We want to be there ahead of them.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to know when you are going to balance the budget? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: The answer is yes, but, more importantly, let me tell you how. When I became President we looked back over the record of the growth of Federal spending and we found that for the previous 8 to 10 years there had been a 10 to 11 percent increase in the growth of Federal spending over that period of time, and this country can't afford to have that kind of rate of growth in Federal spending. In fact, when I sat down for about 100 hours last November and December to make the final decisions on the budget, I found that if we didn't change a law, but just kept the same laws on the statute books, didn't add any, we would have a \$50 billion automatic increase in Federal spending.

We decided that could not be tolerated so we, in my budget that I submitted to the Congress, we cut the rate of growth of Federal spending by 50 percent, and I submitted to the Congress a budget calling for a spending ceiling of \$395 billion, and if Congress were to go along with that cut in the rate of growth of Federal spending we could have a balanced budget for the United States in fiscal year 1979.

But what worries me -- and let me now just talk about the reality of the thing -- the Congress of the United States for the first time in history, has to put together its budget. They have just passed in the Senate, and they are about to pass in the House, an increase in my budget from \$395 billion to \$415 billion or \$416 billion, about a \$17 billion to \$18 billion to \$19 billion increase. Furthermore, they have also increased the anticipated deficit by about \$7 billion.

So what I am really saying to you is, we are doing our utmost to balance it and we will balance it and we promise to give an additional major tax cut in the process.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask this question: What is your position on our commitments to Israel?

THE PRESIDENT: First, let me say that one of the really significant achievements of this Administration has been the fact that we have the trust of the Arab nations and the trust of the Israelis, and we have been very helpful in achieving the progress toward a permanent, just settlement in the Middle East.

Now our commitments to Israel or to the Arab nations are that we will help Israel so that it will have the military capability to survive and we will have enough for its security.

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At the same time, we are trying to help Israel economically. Simultaneously, I think it is good foreign policy for the United States to help Egypt, a country which for 15 to 20 years had been under the control of the Soviet Union militarily and economically. They have cast the Soviet Union out of Egypt and now we have an opportunity to help a nation of 50 million who got rid of Communism and who are asking for United States help and assistance. I think we ought to be willing to help and assist that country, which has cast aside the domination of the Soviet Union.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask a question concerning the defense, the military, about an increase, sir, on their pay above a five percent ceiling?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me discuss the question, which I think is one that ought to be discussed. In the budget that I submitted for the next fiscal year I recommended a five percent increase in pay for the 2,100,000 men and women in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines and also a five percent increase for all civilian employees of the Federal Government, and a cost of living increase for all those on Social Security, railroad retirement, military retirement, et cetera.

Now the problem is -- it goes back to the question that this young lady asked me a moment ago -- we have to put some control over the increases in the rate of growth of Federal spending, and it seems to me when we are faced with the kind of deficits that we have had and as we try to achieve a balanced budget, that a five percent increase for military as well as civilian personnel for the United States Government, where they don't have the problems of unemployment once they become classified employees or once they become a part of the military, if they want to stay and make a career, they don't have any lapse in their pay, that a five percent pay increase in this 12-month period was the best we could do under these circumstances.

I hope and trust the people in the military understand it, because they are good Americans and they know what our financial and fiscal problems are.

QUESTION: Sir, just one last question, sir?

THE PRESIDENT: Can we have one and then at least another one?

QUESTION: My question is, would you favor treating firearms like automobiles; namely, requiring operators licenses for their use off the owner's property in lieu of restrictive laws, permits, registration and so forth?

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THE PRESIDENT: Let me put it in my own terms. I am opposed to the registration of a gun owner. I am opposed to the registration of firearms, period.

QUESTION: Mr. President, one last question, please. This is about the B-1 bomber, the B-1.

It is being tested and flown, and if Congress brings it before you to go ahead and build them -- and I believe a rough estimate, sir, is about \$3.5 billion per each and something like 200-plus of those B-1s -- will you veto or will you go through with it?

THE PRESIDENT: We are in the final testing stage right now of the B-1 bomber. In fact, the Secretary of Defense, Don Rumsfeld, who is an ex-Navy pilot, went out and flew it.

But we are in the process at this moment of making the final determination as to whether or not to go into production and to buy 254 of them. In fact, I recommended in the fiscal year 1977 budget \$1 billion 500 million for the procurement of the first B-1 bomber.

Everything that has been tested so far indicates to us that the B-1 bomber will pass the test and will qualify as a new version or an add-on to the B-52s, which are now flying 10, 15 or 20 years.

So we have to have a new high performance strategic aircraft and the B-1 is the aircraft, if it passes the tests -- and I am confident it will.

But let me, since you brought up the subject of defense, I think it is important to talk about facts and figures and I think I have quoted the accurate facts. It is indicative that I know something about the details.

Well, a few months ago when my opponent came to Washington, D. C. to announce his candidacy, some of you here in Texas may not have had the benefit of listening to the press conference. This is right on the point of how much you know or how much you don't know about the facts.

A reporter at that press conference on November 20 asked my opponent how much he would recommend for a defense budget for the United States -- and let me read the answer verbatim because it shed a great deal of light on this campaign.

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He said, and I quote precisely, "I didn't say what I wanted to spend. You have put me in a position in which the answer is very difficult because I think only when you are in that position of command do you have access to all of the information that is necessary for making that decision and, obviously, I am not in that position and do not have that information at this moment."

Later on, another reporter asked him a somewhat similar question on defense spending, and this is what his answer was in the area of defense: "One" -- his quote -- "One has always to face the fact that there are facts not known to you and which cannot be known to you because of its classification, and this always must be kept in mind as a reservation about any opinion that you might render."

My friends, I would respectfully suggest to you here today that any candidate who begins his campaign by saying he doesn't know enough about national defense to talk about it, and then, in the heat of battle, suddenly tries to make it the central issue, you can hardly expect the American people to take him very seriously.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I would like to ask you a question regarding our energy supplies. What is your view, sir, concerning the Federal Government in controlling both the sources and the distribution of our basic supplies, such as coal, oil, gas and so forth?

THE PRESIDENT: Sir, in January of 1975, I recommended to the Congress total decontrol of domestic oil and total decontrol of new natural gas. Unfortunately, the Congress came along after 11 months and gave me the opportunity to partially decontrol and steps that I could use to decontrol over a 40-month period. I would have preferred total decontrol of both, but now that we have this law, which was marginally acceptable, I am using every provision to decontrol distillate fuels, residual fuels and eventually gasoline as quickly as we can, plus every step in the 40-month period, so we can get rid of controls, period, and that is a pledge made to you and to the American people.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

END (AT 1:25 P.M. CDT)