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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED AT A SALUTE TO THE
VICE PRESIDENT DINNER

Tonight, we pay tribute to a man of unlimited talent, outstanding accomplishment, and boundless enthusiasm. When he tackles a project, he gives it everything he's got. Using a little wrestling jargon, I have never known him to apply a half-Nelson to anything!

He has been a distinguished public servant, a sensitive and compassionate humanitarian, a superbly able Governor--and now he has embarked on a new and even greater challenge--the second highest office in our Nation. Mr. Vice President, I hope to share for a very long time your counsel, your confidence--and your company.

In the special area of foreign policy, I am not the first President to have the Vice President's wise counsel. Nelson visited Latin America on the eve of World War II. He perceived the danger of anti-American propaganda and the penetration by our enemies of the governments and economies of some nations in this hemisphere. He voiced timely concern to President Roosevelt in August, 1940--over a year before Pearl Harbor.

In designating Nelson to coordinate Inter-American affairs, President Roosevelt was not thinking about Rockefeller, the Republican. He was thinking about Rockefeller, the American.

Nelson improved relations with Latin America during the darkest days of World War II. In 1945, President Roosevelt appointed him Assistant Secretary of State for American Republic Affairs. Nelson contributed much to the concept of mutual security that led to the Rio Pact, to NATO, and to enlightened international cooperation.

During World War II, I served aboard a Navy aircraft carrier. I began to see the islands of the Pacific and America's links with the world in a broader perspective than I did as a young man in Michigan.

When I took my oath as a member of the Congress in 1949, Senator Arthur Vandenberg was senior Senator from Michigan and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. The Senator was concerned about the future of bi-partisanship in foreign policy. He preferred to call it "non-partisanship." Although seriously ill, Senator Vandenberg saw his job as unfinished unless the Congress and President Truman could fashion a decent peace to prevent World War III.

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While working for world peace with President Truman and Secretary of State Byrnes, the Senator--in his own words--"flatly refused to make any speeches on a partisan basis because I have considered that this would destroy bi-partisan, which is to say, united American foreign policy. "

In 1950, Senator Vandenberg emphasized the need--as he put it--"under our indispensable two-party system, to unite our official voice at the water's edge so that America speaks with maximum authority against those who would divide and conquer us and the free world." He said, "It does not involve the remotest surrender of free debate in determining our position. On the contrary, frank cooperation and free debate are indispensable to ultimate unity. "

When one party controls the Congress, as did the Republican 80th Congress, and the other party controls the White House, as did President Truman's party, there must be cooperation, or as Senator Vandenberg said, "America would be devoid of any foreign policy at all. "

In February, 1951, Senator Vandenberg differed with Senator Wherry, the powerful Nebraska Republican, whose resolution would have tied the hands of President Truman in foreign policy. The President was seeking to add American Army divisions to an integrated North Atlantic military force commanded by General Eisenhower. While respecting Senator Wherry's sincerity, Senator Vandenberg was convinced the restrictive resolution would undermine the President's Constitutional authority.

So it was in February, 1951, that Senator Vandenberg said of President Truman. "He is the only President we shall have and this is the only Congress we shall have during the next critical two years; the quicker we reach a working relationship so that we can have a united policy, the safer our country will be. "

Today, I find myself in President Truman's job. I look to the new Congress and the critical years ahead. And I have to deal with the economic crisis in the United States and other industrialized democracies. I am concerned with the problems of recession and inflation, of unemployment and energy shortage. I would be even more concerned if we were to have an ostrich-like 94th Congress burying its head in the domestic sands while expensive oil flows into America and expensive dollars flow out.

What has changed since the days of Arthur Vandenberg? During the latter years of my service in the Congress, severe strains developed between the legislative and executive departments over the Southeast Asian policies of two Administrations--one Democratic, the other Republican. Indeed, America experienced a series of shocks, domestic and foreign, dating back to the assassination of President Kennedy. We have new preoccupations, new preceptions, and new priorities.

Nevertheless, we need nonpartisanship in foreign affairs today more than ever before. We need more, not less, credibility and continuity. We need more, not less, confidence in the honest motives and high patriotic concerns of one another.

This is not to say that I wish Congress would keep out of foreign affairs and that I want to run everything beyond the water's edge, in my own way, without legislative interference. Under the Constitution, the Congress has a fundamental responsibility in the shaping of all broad matters of public policy, both foreign and domestic. Nobody knows this better than I do.

But while the Congress, together with the President, makes foreign policy, only the Executive can execute it. For the first 11 years of our national independence, we experimented with government by committee, the Continental Congress under the Articles of Confederation. There was a President of the Congress, but no President of the Country. It is a wonder that General Washington was able to win the war.

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Once our national independence was recognized, Washington and the other Founding Fathers wasted no time in writing a new Constitution in which they set aside their fears of a tyrannical King or too-powerful Prime Minister and vested the executive power in a President of the United States of America. It gave the Chief Executive command of the armed forces raised by the Congress and the power to negotiate treaties and to receive and appoint Ambassadors with the advice and consent of the Senate.

Clearly, the Constitution contemplates a political partnership beyond the water's edge and clearly it does not contemplate the day-to-day conduct of foreign policy, any more than the day-to-day conduct of military operations, by many different voices in the deliberative legislative branch.

Our system has served us well. Without reviewing all 200 years of our history, and the frequent domestic debates between our great parties, I can say from my own perspective, and that of many of you, that the record of American foreign policy since the Second World War has been overall a most remarkable success.

When World War II ended, the world waited to see what the United States would do--whether our power and our moral commitment would continue to be engaged worldwide, or whether we would retreat again into the isolationism that contributed to the world conflict in the first place. With the Marshall Plan, and the Truman Doctrine, and the formation of our first peacetime alliances, we provided an essential bulwark of security, stability, and economic progress for the world.

In the 1970's, we built on this foundation with imagination and startling success. We ended America's 10-year military involvement in Vietnam. We ended it with honor and brought home our prisoners of war.

We ended the crisis of Berlin. We achieved unprecedented agreements in strategic arms control with the Soviet Union. We fashioned a new relationship with China. We ended a war in the Middle East and have been instrumental in moving the parties to the conflict toward a stable and lasting peace.

We began a new dialogue with Latin America. We launched an international effort to meet the challenge of a global food crisis. We have taken up the role of leadership to promote international cooperation in the field of energy.

This is a remarkable achievement. It is evidence of what the United States can accomplish when it shows the will and determination to persevere, and a demonstration of the historic reality that there is no alternative to American leadership. Our diplomacy is still the best hope of the world in finding solutions to age-old conflicts. We respect the trust which countries place in us--on both sides, in so many regional disputes.

But we have not been involved in the world simply out of altruism--though we need not apologize for that--but because the kind of world America lives in directly affects the kind of life Americans live at home.

Today, more than ever before, peace and prosperity at home and abroad are indivisible. Never before has the state of this nation depended more on the state of the world.

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In a world of continuing complexity, America's role in promoting peace is indispensable. In the conflicts in the Middle East, including Cyprus, our mediation has been indispensable. In a world of proliferating nuclear weapons, our efforts to limit strategic arms and to promote essential new safeguards against their further spread are indispensable.

There has never been a greater need for purposeful American policy and leadership. This cannot be achieved without unity at home.

Our Secretary of State is today in the Middle East engaged in the quest for a peaceful settlement of one of the most serious political deadlocks in the world, a conflict which has posed for 25 years great dangers of international confrontation and crisis. The American public are united in wishing him God speed and great success in this extraordinary mission. He carries with him the hopes and prayers of the nation for a just and lasting peace.

In this difficult time, the American people expect responsible conduct from individual members of the Congress and from the Congress as a whole, as well as from the President.

In Cyprus, the United States has long sought to mediate between two valued allies in order to secure the independence and territorial integrity of that strategic island.

A renewed negotiation, scheduled to bring together the Foreign Ministers of Greece and Turkey in a meeting with Secretary Kissinger in Brussels this week, broke down because of Congressional insistence that military assistance to Turkey be terminated. This action, I am convinced, is a self-inflicted wound -- it will seriously impair our relations with a valued ally, and achieve no benefit whatever. It will adversely affect Western security generally, and with serious consequences to the strategic situation in the Middle East. And most tragically of all, it does nothing to improve the lot of those Cypriots in whose name this Congressional action was supposedly taken.

But the issue is greater than this immediate example in the Eastern Mediterranean. The issue is what kind of an ally are we, when we punish our allies more severely than our enemies? What kind of statesmen are we, when we so poorly perceive our own interests? This question is being asked by nations who look to us for leadership. I can give no good answer.

In the final days of the last Congress, the 1974 Trade Reform Act was passed. That Act was designed to strengthen the basis of our economic ties with our allies, our adversaries, and the developing countries, in the interest of worldwide progress and stability. These are national goals on which there is little disagreement.

Yet these goals were jeopardized in the last Congress by an unfortunate amendment, which withheld generalized tariff preferences from all OPEC members, whether or not they participated in last winter's oil embargo. This indiscriminate and hasty act damaged our relations with Ecuador, Venezuela, Nigeria, and Indonesia despite the fact that they refused to participate in last winter's embargo against the United States.

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Another amendment to that Act led the Soviet Union to repudiate its 1972 economic accord with us, including its agreement to settle its World War II lend-lease debt. The United States had agreed in 1972, as a result of the marked improvements in our overall relationship to grant the Soviet Union nondiscriminatory trading rights. The breakdown of these foreign policy agreements, unfortunately, could cause additional tragic consequences exactly contrary to the intent of Congress.

The issue is not the goals of our foreign policy. The executive and legislative branches share the same hope for America. What is at issue is the process of our policy making, not its objectives. But as men of good will, we must solve the problem of our respective roles. It would be a national tragedy if conflict between Congress and the Executive jeopardized the achievements of the 1970's and prevented further progress toward our common goals.

As I said in my State of the Union message, I doubt that restrictive amendments are an adequate tool for shaping the conduct of foreign policy. An attitude frozen in a statute -- however noble -- cannot shape events. In a world of 150 nations and fast-moving change, diplomacy is a process, not execution of a rigid blueprint.

The door of the White House, as I have stated, is open to the Congress, to new members as well as old.

I do not expect 535 reincarnations of Senator Vandenberg. Yet, I do appeal for an open-minded spirit of enlightened national concern to transcend any partisan or internal party politics that threaten to bring our successful foreign policy to a standstill. I challenge the Senate and House to give me the same consideration that Senator Vandenberg sought and got for President Truman. Can we consult and act rather than pontificate and poke?

I refuse to believe that we have passed the point of no return in leaving our traditional system of nonpartisanship in foreign policy.

I refuse to believe that it will become easier to negotiate with foreign adversaries and allies than with the Congress of the United States.

I seek a coalition of confidence with the new Congress. And there is no area in which this is more critical than in the national response to the crisis of energy.

Last winter's oil embargo generated widespread agreement that a comprehensive energy policy is needed. We have analyzed and debated the options. Delay will only compound the problem.

We must begin now. Our oil and gas supplies will continue to dissipate and imports will grow, unless we take immediate steps to reduce consumption and develop new supplies.

Congressional action is imperative if the United States is to maintain its international leadership. We cannot expect other nations to tighten their belts if we are unprepared to do the same. We cannot appear unwilling to take the unpleasant, but necessary steps to cure our energy and economic problems when other nations are trying to face up to their own difficulties. Oil consuming nations must unite. The surplus of Arab dollars is creating a financial crisis in Western Europe. Concerted action is essential.

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My administration has offered the first comprehensive, integrated solution to our economic and energy problems ever assembled. If we do not act now on the short-term goals, there will be unacceptable costs to the United States -- both domestically and internationally.

You may wonder why am I calling for nonpartisanship in foreign affairs at a Republican Party dinner. Why didn't I make this speech before a Democratic Party dinner?

Well, for one thing, I wasn't invited to any Democratic Lincoln Week dinners.

For another, the tribute to Nelson Rockefeller is more than a partisan tribute, just as his confirmation as Vice President by an overwhelming majority of the last Democratic Congress was more than a partisan confirmation. And his own early career of public service is a good example of the nonpartisan tradition that goes back to the war years of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

But most of all, I use this Republican forum for this appeal because I am proud and you can be proud, of our party's contributions both in the Congress and the White House, in and out of power, to 30 years of constructive continuity in American foreign policy.

I renew my offer to consult with members of the Congress on a further orderly phase-out of our military assistance to Southeast Asia, on a basis which honors our repeated promises to allies that we will help to supply those willing to fight for their own freedom. I do not see how we can renege or compromise that principle. I do not intend to do so.

I am also willing, as was President Truman, to bring the responsible leaders of the Democratic majority in Congress in on the foreign policy takeoffs as well as landings -- particularly the crash landings. I have already done so and will continue to expand these two-way consultations. Let me repeat what Senator Vandenberg told his Republican friends about President Truman and the Republican 80th Congress:

"He is the only President we shall have and this is the only Congress we shall have during the next critical two years; the quicker we reach a working relationship so that we can have a united policy, the safer our country will be."

Yesterday I stood at the Lincoln Memorial. I saw at the far end of the Mall the great white dome of the Capitol, my home for almost 25 years.

I was reminded of the difficulties President James Polk encountered from a young freshman Congressman from Illinois who denounced the U. S. involvement in the Mexican War as having been "unnecessarily and unconstitutionally begun by the President" without Congressional consent.

And I remembered also how that defeated one-termer, when he returned to Washington as President of a rapidly disintegrating nation took emergency measures which were similarly denounced on Capitol Hill as unconstitutional and dictatorial. When Congress attempted to run the war by committee, President Lincoln told them bluntly that the Ship of State can have only one helmsman.

"In a storm at sea, no one on board can wish the ship to sink" he said in his first annual message, "and yet, not infrequently, all go down together because too many will direct and no single mind will be allowed to control."

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As once again we honor Abraham Lincoln as the greatest President our party has given the Republic, let us rededicate ourselves to the broader vision of the national good which he brought from the Capitol to the White House. Let us continue as Americans to seek his lasting goals of "a just and lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations."

Thank you.

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