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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE
FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TRAVEL PROGRAM LUNCHEON

It is a pleasure for me to appear again this year on behalf of a project I have enthusiastically supported as a Congressman, as Vice President, and now as President.

It has been said that, in diplomacy, there are no true friendships -- only temporary alliances of convenience. Looking back on history, there is some truth to this. But that is not the whole picture and the world would be a pretty grim place if it were. You are professional diplomats. You know what it means to defend your country's interests and negotiate on its behalf.

But, as participants and supporters of the Travel Program for Foreign Diplomats, you also know that human understanding, communication and friendship between people and nations is also a very real and vital force -- an essential force -- for peace in the world today.

In the past 12 years, this very worthwhile program has made it possible for more than 4,000 diplomats to know America, and the American people, in a way that they never could have done through "official channels" only. The cooperation of countless individual American families and private sector support have made this success possible, and I am delighted once again to endorse this program this year, as it carries forward its good work. You are doing a fine job.

To see first hand the beauty and expanse of this great country, to get to know the day-to-day joys and frustrations of an average working family in one of our great cities, to experience the immense diversity of regional tastes and accents and traditions that we call America is perhaps the only way to really comprehend the ideals, aspirations and great strengths underlying our national policies. You cannot understand a nation without knowing its people -- and only by getting to know individuals can you begin to know the people as a whole. By introducing foreign visitors to such a wide range of Americans, the Travel Program performs a great service to our Nation.

I hasten to add that I do not see the Travel Program as a one-way street. It is just as necessary for United States diplomats to get to know the people of their host nations, and to appreciate fully their traditions and cultural achievements. The friendships you help forge today will pay dividends in peaceful understanding for years to come.

I have often said that the keystone to my Administration is openness. But when you get right down to it, the keystone of the American way of life is openness. We don't believe in hiding the truth, whether it's flattering or unflattering. We know that we have our faults and our problems, but we want our friends from abroad to see the truth, to see how we solve our problems openly, and to judge for themselves the success of our democratic experiment.

(MORE) .

We live in a time unique for both its peril and its promise. The potential consequences of war today are more terrible than they have ever been in human history. But, at the same time, the possibility of lasting, global peace and prosperity is closer than ever before. The road to such a peace is bound to be long and difficult, but I deeply believe that we are making headway -- and one of the things that makes the road a little smoother, and the trip more rewarding, is a program like this, and the spirit it represents.

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