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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TRAVEL
PROGRAM LUNCHEON

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FORMAL DINING ROOM

1:30 P.M. EDT

Thank you very much, Bob Anderson, President John Kircher, distinguished foreign diplomats, guests and particularly those who have so long and so well supported this program.

It is really a great privilege and a very high honor to have the opportunity of being here again and participating in this sort of culmination of the program on a once-a-year basis. I was here once as a Congressman, and last year as Vice President, and now I am equally honored to be here as President.

It has been said that in diplomacy there are no true friendships, only temporary alliances of convenience. In looking back on history and studying some of the things that have happened over the last two centuries, I think there is some truth to that.

I think we have to recognize, as well, this is not the whole picture and the world would be a pretty grim place if it were.

There are many in this audience who are professional diplomats, and all of those who are know firsthand what it means to defend your country's interests and to negotiate on its behalf.

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 very real and a very vital force, an essential force for peace in the world today.

In the past 12 years, this very worthwhile program has made it possible, as has been said on many occasions for more than 4000 diplomats to the United States to know America, our people, in a way that they never could have through official channels.

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Cooperation of countless individuals, as well as individual families in the private sector, have supported this program and made it successful. I am delighted once again to say a word of strong, strong endorsement of the program.

This year, as it carries forward again, I hope and trust that its past progress will be multiplied. You are doing a fine job, and I thank each and every one of you -- the sponsors, the participants, as well as others.

To see first hand the beauty and the 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 traditions that we call America -- all of this is perhaps the only way to really comprehend our ideals, our 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, wide range of Americans, the travel program performs a great service to our Nation.

I hasten to add, however, that I do not see the travel program as a one-way street. It is just as necessary for the United States diplomats to get to know the people of their host nations and to appreciate fully the traditions and cultural achievements of the countries where they are posted.

The friendships that you forge today will pay dividends in peaceful understanding for the years to come.

I have often said that the keystone of this Administration is openness, but when you get right down to it, the keystone of our American way of life is openness. We do not believe in hiding the truth, whether it is flattering or unflattering.

We recognize, of course, we know full well, that we have our faults -- and we certainly have 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 government.

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We live in a time unique for both its peril as well as 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 very difficult, but I firmly believe that we are making headway. We will have our disappointments, and one of the things that makes that road a little smoother and the trip far more rewarding is a program like this and the true spirit that it represents.

I congratulate you all. I thank you all, and I wish you the very best.

Thank you.

END (AT 1:40 P.M. EDT)