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Office of the White House Press Secretary
(Rome, Italy)

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF A TOAST BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED
AT A STATE LUNCHEON
AT SALONE DELLE FESTE

Mr. President, Mrs. Leone, Mr. Prime Minister, Excellencies:

I am delighted to be in the Eternal City of Rome, the justly celebrated capital of Italy. It is a pleasure and an honor to be with you today in this hospitable and historic palace.

I am mindful of the symbolism of this visit, underlining as it does the traditional friendship and ties between our two countries.

We in America have just begun the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the United States' struggle for independence. The very name "America" derives from an Italian navigator. Among the Italian contributors to the early history of the American republic are William Paca, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and Fillipo Mazzei, a close friend and collaborator of Thomas Jefferson. Since the very beginnings of our country, the human ties between Italy and the United States have enriched America's life and culture and have served to establish the basis for the deep and warm friendship that exists today.

For a quarter of a century, as a member of the United States Congress, I served in our national Capitol building. I was mindful of the contributions of artists and skilled workers from Italy to the design, construction, and decoration of our national capitol.

The paintings, carvings, and statues of Italian conception and artistry have become enshrined at the heart of our government as part of America's history and heritage. This symbolizes only one aspect of our great debt to Italy. Our hearts are lifted when we hear America's many bands play stirring airs.

And we recall that President Thomas Jefferson, who loved the music of Italy, invited Italian musicians to create our first military band.

In considering those who have made distinguished contributions to the relations between our countries, I would like to take this occasion to express my appreciation for the outstanding service of your Ambassador to the United States -- Ambassador Ortona.

He has gained the respect and appreciation not only of American Presidents and Secretaries of State but also of the American people.

(MORE)

Americans in Italy never feel they are among strangers. We feel among close friends. In this relationship, our two countries share much in common:

-- Our cultural, economic, fraternal, commercial and social ties affirm our continued cooperation and close association:

-- Our governments are committed to a world of freedom and peace and to overcoming tensions which threaten that peace:

-- We are committed to the strength of an alliance that has kept more than a quarter century of peace on the continent and which is indispensable to our concerted efforts to reduce tensions and increase cooperation;

-- Of first importance, we share firm dedication to democratic government and the principles of freedom and liberty. We in America value the role of Italy in the world, your contributions to the Atlantic Alliance, and your efforts toward a stronger Europe working with the United States.

These bonds and shared goals, Mr. President, were set forth in the joint statement issued on the occasion of your visit to the United States last year. They have been reaffirmed in our discussions today.

At the NATO Summit Conference in Brussels last week, the member nations of the Atlantic Alliance renewed their commitment to the Atlantic Alliance and to the principles of friendship and cooperation and the common defense which are its foundation. I must emphasize how much the United States values Italy's partnership and Italian contributions to the Alliance.

We greatly admire the leaders and people of Italy in carrying through difficult economic measures which are crucial in fighting today's economic difficulties. We are keenly aware of Italy's strengths. We are proud of our alliance with you and take confidence in the knowledge that this relationship is welcomed by you.

Mr. President, the warmth of the welcome given me today by you, by your gracious and charming wife, and by the people of Rome on behalf of all the Italian people has been in the highest tradition of Italian hospitality. For me this delightful luncheon with so many friends symbolizes the depth of friendship between our two countries.

In this spirit, I lift my glass in toast to the United States and Italy, to our continuing, growing friendship in the years ahead, to President Leone, to Prime Minister Moro, and to the great Italian people.

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