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Office of the White House Press Secretary

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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT  
TO BE DELIVERED AT  
THE FOURTH OF JULY CEREMONIES  
AT FORT McHENRY

BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

We meet here at twilight's last gleaming.

The casemate walls and silent cannon of Fort McHenry bear quiet testimony to a nation's travail on another night in another age. Francis Scott Key enshrined forever those events in 1814. The patriotism and national pride surrounding our flag, our country and their defense that night are our heritage in song and verse. The Star Spangled Banner is an expression of love of country.

We must not become so sophisticated, so blase, that we ignore these simple but eloquent moments of our history. We need to remind ourselves that America really is "the land of the free and the home of the brave."

We are honored by those who earlier this evening became United States' citizens at ceremonies here. They have chosen what we often take for granted. The hallmark of our first century was the establishment of a free government. In the face of great odds, 13 disparate colonies became a fledgling nation. Its future was insecure. In the first 100 years, the western movement accelerated--vast territories were acquired, states joined the Union, Constitutional issues were raised. Wars were fought, none more devastating than the one that turned American against American. Yet, through that terrible ordeal, it was resolved that this Nation would not endure half slave and half free. The Union was preserved.

By our Centennial in 1976, the American Republic had been securely established. Of this, there was no doubt, either at home or abroad. Our second century has been marked by the growth of a free American economic system. The pioneer spirit which carried us west turned to new frontiers. Railroads spanned the continent and became a web of steel, linking city to city, region to region, town to town.

The automobile and its assembly line changed forever transportation and the manufacturing process. The Wrights mastered powered flight at Kitty Hawk. The age of flight was born. From the first Atlantic crossing by the "Lone Eagle", Charles Lindbergh, to the American astronauts who announced that "The Eagle has landed" when they touched down on the moon, America's leadership was established. The telegram, the telephone, television--all are part of the communications revolution of our second century. Science, medicine, agricultural production, marketing--these have been just a few of the modern frontiers since 1876.

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Our third century, I believe, should be an era of individual freedom. The mass approach of the modern world places a premium on creativity and individuality. Mass production, mass education, mass population, must not smother individual expression, or limit individual opportunity. Individualism is a safeguard against the sameness of society. A government too large and bureaucratic can stifle individual initiative by a frustrating statism. In America, our sovereign is the citizen. Governments exist to serve people. The state is the creature of the populace. These propositions are the foundationstones of our Bicentennial.

Today, in the 199th year of our Independence, we stand at the threshold of a new American experience. Let us make the coming year a great year on American's agenda of achievement. As we move to the Bicentennial of American Independence, let us think of where we will be and what we can achieve by the next July 4th--by the next decade--by the 200th Anniversary of our Constitution--and by the Year 2000.

Let us resolve that this shall be an era of hope rather than despair. Let us resolve that it shall be an era of achievement rather than apathy. Let us resolve that it shall be a time of promise rather than of regret. The Bicentennial should be a time--for each of us-- of self-examination and individual accomplishment. Quality and permanence should be the measurements of our lives. Let us pursue truths and values that will enhance the quality of life. To form a more perfect union, we need to learn more of our country and our people. Americans must appreciate the diversity of our land and our citizens. Boundaries of regionalism and urbanization must dissolve before our will to be one nation and one people.

In the coming year, the Bicentennial must become a true, national experience. The American Revolution and its legacy belong to each of the states and our far flung territories: to every county...to every city... to every church...to every club...and to each and every American citizen. At every school where the American flag flies, it is my hope that there will be in the coming year a concentrated effort in the classroom to study, discuss and portray these past 200 years of our history.

I would urge that every community seek to make its program as meaningful as possible to as many as possible. It should stress the history, culture, achievements and values we associate with our way of life. The ideas that were forged and fought for in the 13 colonies crossed the Appalachians. They followed the Conestoga wagons and rode with the Pony Express. They crossed the Mississippi and the Missouri, spanned the plains and the deserts. They belong as much to the West as they do to the East. Wherever the American flag has gone, so went the concepts of this great Republic. American Clipper ships took the story to the far corners of the earth. American jet-liners carry it everyday across the skies to distant lands. Indeed, this event does not belong just to Americans. This is a celebration of liberty, freedom and democracy--wherever they exist.

While we cherish the many heritages that enrich our land, we of all peoples have no history except what we have written for ourselves. We

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are not Americans alone by birth or blood, by oath or creed or compact among princes. We are Americans because we deliberately chose to be one nation, indivisible, and for 199 years with God's help we have gone forward together. Two centuries of sacrifice and struggle, of conflict and compromise, have gained for us an unprecedented measure of political and economic independence.

We have on this Independence Day of 1975 a free government that checks and balances its own excesses, and a free economic system that corrects its own errors, given the courage and constructive cooperation of a free and enlightened citizenry. This is the amazing history Americans have written for themselves as we begin our Bicentennial celebration.

The Young Republic of yesteryear is today a strong and great nation. It still lives the values of its Declaration, its Constitution, its Bill of Rights. It influences the destiny of millions beyond our shores. It still remains--in Lincoln's words--the last, best hope of earth.

Let us this Fourth of July continue to be a Nation of Hope. The American people believe in Tomorrow--that by dawn's early light our flag will still be there.

Let us be one Nation and one people--indivisible--for our flag is one and our destiny is one.

Let us be a people of values--of liberty, equality and justice--no matter what the cost. That has been our history. We have never counted the cost of freedom.

Let us, in the final analysis, be true to ourselves for then we can be false to no nation or no people. And let us live not only for our own progress but also in harmony and hope for all other men, women and children--everywhere.

In so doing, the United States and its people serve and honor the promise of Francis Scott Key's words:

"...land of the free, and home of the brave."

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