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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
UPON HIS ARRIVAL AT  
EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE

THE BIG HANGAR

10:48 A.M. AST

Senator Ted Stevens, Governor Hammond, Senator Gravel, Congressman Young, Secretary Kissinger, Mayor Gilliam, Mayor Carlson, General Hill, honored guests, ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of Betty and myself, let me thank you all for your generous and very enthusiastic greeting. I can assure you it is a moment that we will both long remember. I don't care what the temperature is outside, your welcome has brought us all the warmth we need, and I thank you very, very much.

Let me also thank the men and women of Eielson Air Force Base for their very gracious hospitality. Frankly, we are just a little awed by the sheer size of this building. I always knew Alaska was big, but up until now I never realized how much of it was inside. (Laughter)

But, I found in my various trips to Alaska that your State and all of its people are very impressive. America will soon get a lot of its oil from Alaska's North Slope, and as everybody in this audience knows, when it comes to baseball, America gets a lot of its great players right here in Fairbanks. What is the name of that team -- the Alaska Gold Panners? (Laughter)

I visited Alaska just a little over a year ago on a previous trip to the Pacific region. This obviously doesn't make me a "sourdough," but I am no newcomer to the knowledge that this great land, a part of another great land, the United States of America, is an inspiring and shining Northern Star in our constellation of stars.

This visit gives us all a great farewell boost on our way to the People's Republic of China, Indonesia and the Philippines. It was just last November when Alaska gave us a grand send-off for a very successful trip to Japan, to the Republic of Korea and the Soviet Union.

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That visit did much to advance the cause of peace. In the year that followed, we have come a long way as a Nation. The United States has moved forward to stabilize our domestic economy and our National self-confidence as well as our international relations.

Your State, determined to help America become self-sufficient in energy, is in the forefront of our national revival. I commend Alaska for its determination to help achieve energy independence for all of us in the United States, and we thank you for it.

The hardy people of Alaska and the alert Armed Forces stationed in this strategic area are a source of great reassurance to all Americans. Let me reassure you on this occasion that this Administration, while striving to preserve world peace, remains aware that the best insurance for peace is the United States military power second to none.

There will be no slackening of support for a first-rate Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. We are vitally interested in the defense of Alaska. Your defense right here is our defense in the lower forty-eight. Worldwide diplomacy would not be credible without a credible military force both in substance as well as perception. It is appropriate to stop here enroute to China. Alaskans are devoted to peace. Just as Alaska adjoins Asia, America's interests are linked to Asia.

You know, and I know, that we must keep the Pacific peaceful. There are fundamental differences between the American and Chinese societies. We may not agree on some issues, but we found an important area of common ground. Our mutual opposition to military expansion in Asia is basic. So is our pledge of non-interference in the internal affairs of other nations. I will seek to strengthen these understandings and to further advance a relationship based upon mutual respect and mutual accommodation.

Alaskans -- some may not remember here -- experienced foreign invasion in World War II. You know, as a result, better than most Americans how critical a strong national defense is to American security.

Let me assure you we will be resolute in the pursuit of peace, but we will never forget that freedom and independence come first and foremost..

Freedom and independence are precious to all Americans, but the words have a very special meaning to Alaskans. Up here when you come in you can vividly feel America's greatness, the sense of a fantastic potential not yet realized a frontier that you fought to protect, a pioneer spirit not only alive but growing in Alaska. The oil which will flow gives your State an entirely and totally new dimension.

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We have become unacceptably dependent on other nations for oil that is our economic lifeblood. Americans become painfully aware of our dependence on foreign oil when an embargo followed the 1973 war in the Middle East. Long lines at service stations and soaring utility bills brought home the personal hardships which oil independence imposes.

Even more chilling was the impact on our national economy, the loss of \$20 billion in the Gross National Product, unemployment for more than a half million Americans and pressures toward a national recession. We are determined to liberate ourselves from this threat. We cannot afford it now or in the future.

In our vast Alaskan reserves, we have the means to help accomplish the goal of energy independence. We have the physical resources, the economic resources, the ingenuity and the national will. All of our natural resources, oil and oil shale, natural gas, coal, uranium and all of our technological capability must be fully utilized if we are to stop depending on unreliable foreign suppliers of energy for the United States.

The liquid gold, which will flow from Alaska's North Slope to the rest of the country, will have a tremendous impact on the Alaskan economy, yes, and that of our entire Nation. Alaskan oil is closer to making a significant contribution to our national energy supplies than any other single source of energy.

I was delighted when the pipeline portion of the project for tapping Alaska's oil reached its half-way mark last October, and I am told it is ahead of schedule, and we are all deeply grateful.

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I wish I could report that all aspects of our energy program were moving as quickly, but let me add, we are making headway and we are going to achieve energy sufficiency and energy independence for 214 million Americans.

Today, it will be my good fortune to tour a part of the pipeline, to get a firsthand look at your accomplishments, and I look forward to seeing the largest privately financed construction project, as Senator Stevens said, in world history.

We expect that oil to flow through the pipeline by the middle of 1977, about 19 months from now. By the end of 1977, the daily flow will reach 1.2 million barrels. This is more than one-eighth of all domestic crude oil production expected at that date. By 1980, the Alaskan North Slope could deliver two million barrels per day, and that would be 20 percent of America's total national crude production.

When your oil production reaches that level, America will save at today's prices at least \$25 million each day in payments for foreign oil. Alaskan oil will reduce the loss of dollars to foreign oil producers by nearly \$10 billion each year by 1980.

There will be a huge economic benefit for the entire United States, and especially for Alaska. Crude oil produced in Alaska last year was valued at nearly \$350 million. Last year's 70 million barrels of oil from Alaskan wells was only one-tenth of the production expected from the North Slope in 1980.

Imagine the revenue -- I am sure you will appreciate it, Governor -- when oil begins to flow through that pipeline. The influx of workers to your State has been dramatic. Last September, the total labor force amounted to some 21,000. The payroll, obviously, invigorated Alaska's economy.

Of course, there have been problems in absorbing so many newcomers from the Lower 48, but you have done a splendid job, and by any standard the benefits far, far outweigh the disadvantages.

When the pipeline is completed, oil tax revenues will greatly benefit all the citizens of Alaska and stimulate your entire economy. It doesn't take a great deal of reading to know that your State is blessed with many priceless natural resources.

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Now, some feared -- and I think it was understandable -- that the pipeline would destroy this great environment that you have in the State of Alaska. Actually, by a fair appraisal, the pipeline has proven to be an outstanding example of how our ecology can be preserved while energy needs are met.

We can -- yes, we must -- have both a decent environment on the one hand and decent energy on the other, and we will.

The example that you have set in Alaska has convinced me, and I am sure many others in the Congress and throughout the United States, that we can have both. We can use your example to have balanced policies, for both are vitally important to our future.

Alaska's energy wealth doesn't stop with oil. It is estimated that Alaska has almost 32 trillion cubic feet of recoverable natural gas, only slightly less than the total reserves in the Gulf of Mexico. I can assure you it is urgently needed in other States of the Union.

Flying up here, I had the privilege of learning something else -- that Alaska has unbelievable reserves of coal. Yes, our drive for energy independence relies very heavily upon Alaskan oil, gas and coal reserves, and all Americans are very, very proud that Alaska has contributed so much by accelerated construction of the oil pipeline.

Obviously, your contributions in the future will even be greater.

In addition to oil and gas, Alaska will help to meet America's critical needs for other essential minerals.

I salute Alaska. I count on Alaska. The State of Alaska is separated geographically from our other States. It took us just a little over seven hours to fly to Fairbanks from Washington, D.C. Yet, all of us in the Lower 48 feel very close in our hearts to the people of Alaska and your great State.

I am very mindful, as I stand here today, of the pride I felt some years ago when, as a Member of the Congress, I voted for Alaskan Statehood, and you would never let me and those others who voted for it down at all. We are very grateful for your efforts.

We were told then, and it has been said many times since, Alaska is America's last real frontier. Your pioneer spirit is developing not only our natural resources, but vital human resources.

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All America benefits from your many, many, many achievements. We, as fellow Americans, are proud, appreciative and most grateful.

Thank you very, very much.

END (AT 11:05 A.M. AST)