

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Office of the Vice President
(Albuquerque, New Mexico)

PRESS CONFERENCE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT
AT THE
ZUNI ROOM, ALBUQUERQUE CONVENTION CENTER
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

(AT 4:25 P.M. MST)

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I would just like to say what a pleasure it is to be here in Albuquerque, to have the chance to have flown down on the plane with Pete Domenici and his very attractive wife, and your distinguished Congressman Manual Lujan, and to be here with Jack, your State Chairman, and all the other party leaders, and to be here for a fund-raising occasion for the Republican Party.

I happen to believe very strongly in the two-party system. And one of the great strengths and vitalities of this country has been the two-party system throughout our history. Your distinguished Senator and your great Congressman have shown the importance of that system in their representation, not only of the great State of New Mexico, but we feel they represent equally well the people of this country as a whole. We are proud of them and grateful to you for sending them up.

I would just like to say before answering questions that this is a happy moment for me to be here because we have been through a couple of tough years as a nation in the world, a period of recession and unemployment, and now we see that due to the courage of a President whose dedication to the best interests of the people of this country, it has come through loud and clear. Inflation has been cut in half, down around 6 percent, and unemployment has turned around and we have seen two million people get back on the payroll. So we are at a point where we were when we had the highest employment in the history of the country.

There are two and a half million men and women looking for jobs, and we have to have economic growth so they will have those jobs. And we have to have economic expansion on down the road to produce about a million, million and a half jobs a year for the young men and women coming out of college.

But one of the great things is that this country has extraordinary human resources and natural resources. We have the great scientific and technological capacity so we can produce the energy, the raw materials and protect our environment while we have growth. Some people feel no-growth has arrived. I don't agree. I think growth is essential. And we now see clearly we can achieve together and play our role in the world as well as meet the needs of our people at home.

So I am delighted to be here representing the President. He was going to come and couldn't come. He got involved in a few primaries, doing very well in them, and I am here representing him and delighted to have this privilege and opportunity.

Thank you very much.

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QUESTION: The policies of Secretary of State Kissinger seem to have become a major topic, certainly among Democrats. What is your assessment of the Secretary's performance?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Do you want my frank opinion?

QUESTION: Yes.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: The Secretary of State is one of the great assets of the present Administration. Therefore, the best thing the Democrats can do is try to cut him down so he will be less of an asset. That is my personal opinion. You asked me so I am telling you.

They are trying to make a political issue out of foreign policy, which to me is a tragedy. At the time of Pearl Harbor when Senator Vandenberg, a great Republican Senator, said, "We have to have politics stop at the water's edge," the Republicans joined with the Democrats and we had a united foreign policy. This nation needs a united foreign policy. Those who try to take advantage by attacking the Secretary and the President on foreign policy, I think it is interesting to note did not do too well in Florida after the heavy attacks.

QUESTION: What is the Federal Government doing to open the port of Anapra in New Mexico?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You have to ask the Senator right behind you. I honestly don't know. I hate to be that poorly informed.

QUESTION: Do you think Mr. Ford is completely well ahead enough now in all these primaries that he is going to be unchallenged at the Republican National Convention?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Having been in this business for a long time myself, I would never take anything for granted, particularly when it is the peoples' vote.

My feeling is he has got to continue to do what he has been doing, which is speak with the sincerity and the frankness that he feels represents the best interests of the American people. And he has vetoed some very popular legislation which is popular with the people who were the beneficiaries. But he recognizes that inflation is the serious destructive force undermining those who can less afford to cope with the impact of inflation, the elderly, those on fixed incomes, those working. Therefore, he has chosen the course of trying to hold down federal expenditures to allow the American enterprise system to get going again to provide the jobs.

I don't think he is going to relax. I think he is going to stay in there doing his thing as President, going to the people with issues in the campaign. I don't think he will take anything for granted until the last vote is cast on election day in November.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, Mr. Ford has tried to eliminate the word detente from his vocabulary. Do you think detente is working out?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Detente has been misunderstood by a great many people, and I am sure his reason for saying that was because of those who misunderstood it and it is hard to reach everybody to explain. And he is just trying to eliminate the word, as you say.

The truth of the matter is that the Soviet Union has developed a tremendous military capability. The United States does not and cannot afford, in terms of the interests of the people of the world, a confrontation with the Soviet Union, particularly a nuclear confrontation. Therefore, the objective was to try and find a way of opening communications with the Soviet Union, with Mainland China, so as to remove those dangers of superpower confrontation which could lead to another world war.

And those who were sophisticated enough to be aware of international policies and problems, they were totally aware of the fact that the Communist world was going to continue to try and extend their power and their influence to achieve their goals, which is world domination by Communism. And detente did not mean we could relax our vigilance in developing freedom in the world. It simply meant we wanted to open communications to avoid confrontation. That is the policy, and what word you call it is totally unimportant. It is my understanding then maybe that was the quickest way to undo the misunderstanding.

But I personally think good. I have to say as an individual, I think what happened when we withdrew the covert support of the forces of freedom in Angola and allowed the Communists and Soviet Union and Cuban vassals with their military forces over there to go against the will of the people and conquer the nation and make it Communist, I think is one of the most serious mistakes the Congress has made in our generation.

QUESTION: What is the present arms policy since we are always selling weaponry --

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Which country did you have in mind?

QUESTION: The Middle Eastern countries, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, Iran.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You are putting your finger on an important point. When you say the Middle East nations are not our friends, when you take Egypt, which is one of the Middle East nations which had been under Communist subjugation for 18 years, and then President Sadat had the courage to throw the Communists out and settle differences with Israel and prevent the dangers of war. This was a major step forward in what one could call the field of detente. Where did the Egyptians go at this point? Who did they go to to get support? And it isn't only Israel that is a problem for them. They have a very serious problem with their neighbors on the other side, you take Lybia.

So the United States has followed a policy of a balance of military capabilities that would avoid the temptation of war.

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Now Saudi Arabia has been a friend of this country's diplomatically ever since the days of President Roosevelt. The President and King Faisal were very close and personal friends. They were our allies in the war. They have taken economic action in raising the price of oil, which certainly has been unfortunate in terms of our economic interests and those of the free world.

But I don't think you could say this was an act of an enemy. This was a self-interest act done purely on the basis of their economic interests.

QUESTION: Mr. Ford has suggested or hinted there may not be any more Arms Limitation Agreement with the Russians. In light of what you mentioned about detente, do you think that would be a good move?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have never heard him say that in any meetings I have attended. And I know he is very anxious to pursue the SALT Agreements, and he felt what was done at Vladivostok was extremely popular and he expects to continue that policy. So I am really not clear from what I have heard him say that that is the policy.

QUESTION: There has been speculation as to who is the first militarily in the world. Can the Ford Administration honestly say the United States still is?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think he has said first. I think he has said there should be no one that has the greater power, if I am correct on that.

QUESTION: I think a lot of Americans are wondering if the Russians are more well equipped than the United States.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If you take the trend in expenditures in construction, both in the Soviet Union and the United States, theirs is up and ours has been down. So if those trends continue, they will have supremacy. Therefore, the President asked for an increase in the military budget this year, and I think he was absolutely right. I have been deeply concerned for the past 20-some years, and have written various reports during that period about the fact we were not maintaining our capability in terms of science, technology and the development of modern weapons that would preserve our strength in the world, which is essential in the preservation of freedom.

QUESTION: How long will it take the Russians to reach that supremacy?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It depends on what we do. You see, the problem is in a period of inflation you can keep spending the same amount of money but it buys less. Therefore, one has to increase the expenditures in order to get the same amount. And we are in a situation, I think, that is extremely critical.

QUESTION: How much more do we need to stop the Russians from getting ahead?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: That depends on what they spend. It is relative. I think there are two areas. One, the

expenditure of money for research and development, and the other is equipment. If you extend research and development and come up with new weapons and technology, that is important because then you can get a breakthrough which may make our own and our opponents' weapons structure totally obsolete. The way things are moving, this is very true.

The Cruise Missile which the United States has developed is perhaps one of the most exciting and satisfying and important breakthroughs which puts us way ahead of the Soviets in that capability and it is extremely important to the United States.

QUESTION: Do you think Ronald Reagan has been significantly knocked out of the race yet?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Not yet.

QUESTION: What scenario would bring you into that, sir?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: In my opinion, and I have said this right along so it is nothing new, that he would have to go through Illinois. The President has to win there. And one can well add to Illinois perhaps North Carolina because North Carolina is a Southern state where his strength has been considered invincible except when Mr. Nixon made the arrangement with the South at the 1968 convention, because I was counting on Mr. Ragan keeping those Southern delegates until the second or third ballot.

QUESTION: On the thinking about Reagan, if he were to come on stronger in later primaries do you see any possibility where you would come into the race?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir, I don't. And I don't think he will come out strong.

QUESTION: Following out what you said he was winning on his record in Florida when he came in there toward the end and campaigning. The polls showed he was behind earlier. Don't the powers of the incumbency, and say what he did about Castro and those things and the contracts and things of this sort that he can announce at the last minute, don't those help him in his campaign?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Of course they do. And this is part of politics. Before, Governor Reagan, who is a good friend of mine, had predicted two to one in the beginning. He knew the President had all these capabilities.

QUESTION: What about the talk that Ronald Reagan could be Vice President and your status in the continuation in the Vice Presidency the second time around?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have said since I was cleared by the Congress to be Vice President, and I said it immediately, the President should make no decisions, no commitments about the Vice Presidency for the next term until he is nominated, that he should say nothing about it, and that I was not a candidate. And in order to convince people I wasn't, I wrote a letter saying I wasn't. Then when he is nominated he should pick the person who in his opinion could best serve the nation

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and the party. That is what he will do. Who that person will be in November, I couldn't tell you. That is a decision he will have to make then and only he can make it because it is his decision.

QUESTION: You said you are not running, but you are not closing the option at that point of accepting after the nomination?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Yes, I closed it in that letter. I said -- well, I forgot what the words were, but that is my intent.

QUESTION: What about the energy crisis? We have heard so much about what we can do to achieve independence but we seem to be spending more on Mideast oil now than before.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You are absolutely right.

QUESTION: Is it Congress or the White House?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: It is Congress, if you will forgive me for saying so. Congress responds to the American people. The American people don't think there is an energy crisis. I got asked by none other than Governor Exon, and he said, "I don't think there is an energy crisis. There is plenty of oil at the pumps." I said, "Why? Because we are spending \$30 billion this year buying energy this year from abroad. Another boycott and we could be sunk." This would be the most disastrous thing to our economic and social life. The Eastern Seaboard is right on 80- to 90-percent dependency on imported oil.

So the President is right. The Congress has not faced up to this yet. And I think the American people, if they realize it is a crisis, they are going to hold the majority in Congress responsible because it is going to take 10 years to develop energy independence. And it is only because of the farmers generating the capital to pay for it.

QUESTION: I wanted to ask you, in view of the more friendly relations between this nation and Mainland China, do you foresee a total cutoff with all our ties with Taiwan in the near future?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, I don't.

QUESTION: Never?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You didn't say never, you said in the near future.

QUESTION: Okay, ever?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I can't see beyond the near future. What happens after that, you know, that is time. These things evolve.

QUESTION: Unemployment is the biggest problem that most middle class Americans face. Hubert Humphrey was quoted last week he does not believe the Ford Administration statistics. Who do we believe, the Ford Administration statistics or doubting Thomas Mr. Humphrey?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: If Mr. Humphrey were not available for the Presidency, then I think he could be more kind about the Ford statistics in his analysis, because he is an intelligent man. But those statistics are not Mr. Ford's. They come out of the Department of Labor. They are done by bureaucrats, most of them Democrats who have been there during all the Democratic years, and these are not fudged or faked statistics, these are real statistics.

QUESTION: Why is the government spending so much in nuclear energy when New Mexico is like the fourth place in the world that is sunlight? Why is the government spending so much in the nuclear area? Isn't it because the large oil companies have a lot to get?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: How do we get your solar heat from New Mexico to New York? We would love it. Any scheme you have got, we are ready.

QUESTION: The government has a strong involvement in nuclear.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I have studied this question for a long time. It is important but it is a fraction of our energy needs.

QUESTION: Based on what?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Based on what scientists have developed.

QUESTION: Government scientists?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: No, sir, outside. I think you will find the largest single area for the immediate future is nuclear. I was at a scientific meeting this morning of a panel called by the President pending this new legislation. And the scientists had just come up with a new scheme for the disposal of nuclear waste. And as mentioned in the meeting -- it was an open meeting so I can repeat it -- they have found you can go out to the ocean bed where the plates are stable -- and this is not a government scientist either; he is not paid but came to the meeting as a volunteer -- this is 10,000 feet below the water. Tremendous pressure. You can drill down 2,000 feet below that, put your waste in a stable plate in the bottom of the ocean, seal it, which you have to do, and then the pressure of 10,000 feet of water. They feel it is the most exciting new development in disposal of waste on a safe basis that has ever been done. So this is an interesting one for you to write about.

QUESTION: You have sought for the Presidency.

THE VICE PRESIDENT: Off and on.

QUESTION: A lot of national observers suggested because of your age this would have been your last chance. Are you in your own mind resigned that you will never be elected President?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I will tell you first my age never has bothered me so that is no problem.

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Secondly, if I was resigned to never be President, I should have not taken the Vice Presidency because the purpose is, God forbid, if something should happen to the President.

QUESTION: Mr. Vice President, do you feel the trip to China by former President Nixon was detrimental or to our benefit? What does the Administration think about that?

THE VICE PRESIDENT: I don't think it was that significant.

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(At 4:50 P.M. MST)