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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
UPON HIS ARRIVAL TO
LOVE FIELD

7:09 P.M. CDT

THE PRESIDENT: I want to congratulate you, Bob, for winning the great victory for mayorship of Dallas, and I congratulate you and wish you the very, very best in a very important responsibility in handling the good affairs of the City of Dallas, and I know you will with great success.

I do want to thank Tom Landry, who I have known for a good many years and envied and respected, because I think Tom epitomizes the finest in American competitive athletics. It is nice to see both Tom and Mrs. Landry.

Then it is nice to see Mary Ellen. I have seen a lot of very beautiful young ladies in the State of Texas in the last two days and it is nice to meet Miss Texas. Congratulations and best wishes to you.

With those observations and comments, I would be delighted and pleased to answer any questions.

May I say with the deepest gratitude, I am delighted to be here in Dallas and to be, at this time, with Mayor Bob Folsom, and I am delighted, of course, and highly honored and pleased with the endorsement of Tom Landry for my candidacy for the nomination as well as the Presidency of the United States, and thank you very, very much, Tom.

I would be glad to answer any questions.

QUESTION: It has been said that you will ask Congress to repeal the Byrd amendment. Why did you wait so late to ask Congress to repeal, and what type of effect will it have on other countries? Will you ask them to also buffer up the sanctions on that amendment?

THE PRESIDENT: I think, first, you have to understand the factual situation. When I was in the House of Representatives as minority leader, when I became President, I have consistently believed that the overall benefits of the repeal of the Byrd amendment overcame any reasons to retain the Byrd amendment.

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So I haven't changed my position. I have been consistent for a long, long time and I hope and trust that the Congress will do so.

QUESTION: President Ford, you are reported as saying that the Nation will be better off as soon as it forgets Watergate. Do you think that is a self-serving statement since obviously the Republican Party will be better off as soon as the Nation forgets Watergate?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think that was a very unfortunate period in American history, a real tragedy, and I think we have more important things to think about in the future than to be concerned and distraught by some of the problems that occurred in the past.

As a personal matter, I think the record is very, very clear. When I was nominated for Vice President, 400 FBI agents spent better than a month checking my record from birth to my age and they found nothing had any connection whatsoever with Watergate, nothing. And then two committees, one in the House and one in the Senate, investigated, interrogated me and came to the conclusion I had no connection whatsoever with Watergate.

Then the Senate and the House as a whole by overwhelming votes confirmed me, clearly indicating that in their opinion -- and I want you to remember it was a Democratic Congress -- overwhelmingly confirmed me by a substantial margin. So I think as far as I am personally concerned, I have no connection whatsoever with the Watergate period.

QUESTION: Mr. President, earlier today you said John Connally had good reasons to remain neutral in the primary. Could you tell us what those good reasons are?

THE PRESIDENT: I assume, since John, who is a very good friend of mine, has decided not to endorse me or to endorse my opponent, he had good reasons. I think you will have to ask him for the reasons that he has not endorsed either me or my opponent.

QUESTION: Does the addition of Coach Landry indicate any last-minute change in his strategy? (Laughter)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I have known Coach Landry and respected him, not only as an outstanding football player but probably one of the outstanding coaches in the National professional league in the history of that league. So I feel very, very fortunate that a man of that stature, a man of that great respect in Texas, as well as elsewhere, has endorsed me. I am just very grateful.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, earlier today you said you could confirm the gist of the Woodward-Bernstein book "The Final Days." I wonder if your confirmation includes such things as the characterization and description of your Secretary of State and his relationship with the former President? It described Mr. Kissinger as despising the former President and working with him anyhow.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the investigation by the FBI of my record, the investigation by the two committees in the Congress -- the House and the Senate -- involved me and my record, and they found that I passed the test without any problem. They didn't get into the relationship of other individuals to anybody else in the Administration.

QUESTION: So in confirming that the gist of the book was true, you are not confirming that particular --

THE PRESIDENT: No, I was only confirming my personal experiences in those latter days and, as far as I had any personal observations, any personal connections, it was strictly a business relationship where the President told me at one time that he was going to step aside and it was strictly a man-to-man conversation.

QUESTION: So far, have you been pleased with Kissinger's outcome of his trip in Africa?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, I think that Secretary Kissinger has gone there at my direction, one, to reaffirm this country's belief in the right of self-determination of any country, including the United States -- that, of course, is how we became a country -- and, secondly, that under any and all circumstances this country stands for the full protection of minority rights.

At the same time, the Secretary has clearly stated to all of Africa that the United States does not believe that any foreign powers outside of Africa should seek to dominate Africa. Africa should grow and prosper and strengthen itself by its own efforts with the broad help and assistance of a number of more developed nations of the world. So the Secretary has carried out my directives and I think our relationship with the nations of Africa have been considerably enhanced.

QUESTION: Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very, very much. It is nice to see you. It is great to be back in Dallas.

END (AT 7:16 P.M. CDT)