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THE WHITE HOUSE
REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AND
QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION
AT THE
WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF OREGON

PAMPLIN SPORTS CENTER
LEWIS AND CLARK COLLEGE

8:30 P.M. PDT

THE PRESIDENT: Edith, Mrs. Stoel, President Howard, Mr. Pamplin, Liza Morrison, members and guests of the World Affairs Council:

It is a very great privilege and a tremendous honor for me to have the opportunity of participating in this program tonight, and one of the nicest things that I find in traveling around the country is seeing, getting reacquainted with very good and very fine friends, such as Edith Green. I think she set forth much more articulately than I our relationship as Members of the House of Representatives for 20 years.

But, let me say something concerning her, if I might take a minute or two. There was no person on the House floor who could speak more eloquently and with more knowledge, and more dedication in a wide variety of fields than Edith Green. But she was the best when it came to the problems and the solutions in the field of education.

We miss Edith Green in Washington. I miss her, as President of the United States, and the quality of the Congress suffers because of her return to Portland.

Edith, it is a great privilege to see you and I thank you for your very generous and very kind remarks.

Not surprisingly, I would like to take this occasion to talk somewhat seriously about foreign policy -- not the Truman or Eisenhower or Ford policy, nor the Acheson, Dulles or Kissinger policy, but the overall foreign policy of these United States of America.

That is one of the things we wrote the Constitution to better manage, and I am entrusted at this time with the conduct of our relations with other countries. We cannot have 535 elected officials and as many more candidates making the critical foreign policy decisions that arise daily and sometimes hourly, though there is no law against anybody criticizing them, as I have discovered along with my predecessors. (Laughter)

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Domestic political tides ebb and flow, but foreign policy is a continuous stream. Its course is affected by changes in elective officials but it is mainly formed from our geography, our ancestral ties, our natural resources and economic needs, and above all, the common principles and beliefs on which our Nation was founded 200 years ago.

Hard-nosed Yankee traders and persuasive Southern planters we were then, but our foreign policy was never the cynical, cold-blooded calculations of our rivals, past or present. Americans have always looked outward, as at home, with generous measure of idealism.

American foreign policy has been shaped not only by the realities of an imperfect world order and by events that we cannot control, but also by certain truths we believe -- unalienable rights such as freedom and justice, self-determination and the duty of the strong towards the weak, and the prosperous towards the poor. As we have matured and grown more mighty, we have learned some hard lessons in world affairs -- that we cannot force freedom on the unwilling, that we cannot police every distant corner or fill every empty bowl.

We have made mistakes. We have been disillusioned. But we have never wholly abandoned Jefferson's decent respect for the opinions of mankind, or Lincoln's faith that right does make might, or Eisenhower's that freedom today is indivisible. Thus, our foreign policy today is a mixture of the principles that unite us and make us the hope of freedom for others, and the practical counsel of George Washington that the best way to preserve peace is to be prepared for war. Peace through strength is neither a new policy nor a bad one.

Instead of taking you around the world tonight and telling you how many countries I have seen and statesmen I have met or how many hours I have spent with the National Security Council before making the tough decisions of the past 22 months, let me tell you how I arrived at the conviction I have about America's place in the world.

I graduated from the University of Michigan in 1935, torn between my lifelong dream of being a lawyer and making some money playing professional football. (Laughter) I didn't think much about foreign affairs or Government, or even politics.

My first look at the Pacific Ocean was when I went to San Francisco to play in the Shrine East-West New Year's football game. A few months later, I got my first look at the Atlantic. Ducky Pond offered me a job as an assistant football coach at Yale, and I hoped to study law at the same time.

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But Yale Law School had an ironclad rule against full-time students holding jobs, and it took two years. I took one summer off in 1940 to campaign for Wendell Willkie, my first involvement in the political system.

War clouds over Europe and Asia were darkening our own skies, and that Willkie was right in saying America was part of One World. We felt in our hearts that the United States should stand with the forces of freedom and decency against Hitler's outrages, but we had grown up in the wake of the first World War, and maybe this time America ought to mind its own business.

I had just hung up my Yale diploma in Grand Rapids, Michigan, when Pearl Harbor was attacked, and soon I was back to the Pacific again. For me and millions of others, that was a drastic turning point.

We returned from World War II determined to build a peace that would last for our children and their children. We were convinced this could only happen if the United States assumed its full responsibility of leadership in the world. We considered that a very small price compared to the sacrifices our comrades had made. We went home to convince our friends as well as our neighbors.

We knew then, as we know today, that only through the strength and staying power and firm purpose of America could peace be maintained and freedom secured.

I ran for Congress in 1948 on a policy just like that, of strength and responsibility and perseverance in the face of the new Communist challenge, and that is still my position today.

United States foreign policy must never be made by an elite establishment nor bent to the fears of a frustrated few. It must reflect the real purposes of the American people when they follow their very finest instincts.

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There are issues of tremendous complexity and equally great opportunity on our international agenda for the next four years. I cannot cover all, but will discuss several.

Let's talk first about our relations with the Soviet Union, with which we are negotiating in a number of areas to improve stability between the superpowers and further reduce the danger of a runaway nuclear arms race and the risk of thermonuclear holocaust.

Take SALT II, the talks on limiting strategic nuclear weapons. Both sides have more than enough of these terrible weapons to deter any attack by the other side. But in the absence of any agreements, the requirement to avoid strategic inferiority has impelled both sides to keep on building more systems at a tremendous cost.

What are we trying to agree to? A maximum figure for strategic missile launchers and bombers that either side can have ready for use at any given time. At Vladivostok for the first time I got the General Secretary, Mr. Brezhnev, to agree to equal numbers for us as well as for them. For years previously the Soviets had insisted that their situation required that they have more than we. The strategic weapons of our NATO allies wouldn't be counted against our own total.

What is more, the numbers we agreed on require them to destroy some existing strategic systems and allows us to finish our present program. If they want to build new ones, they must scrap the same number of old ones. That was a good deal for the United States, and I am darned proud of it.

So, what are we hung up on at the present time? The fundamental remaining issue is how to deal with certain new systems -- we call them grey area systems -- which are capable of either strategic or tactical use. We are working hard right now to resolve the problem in a way which preserves the interest of both sides.

If we succeed, I will promptly send the negotiated treaty to the Senate for full public scrutiny and public debate. The same is true of the peaceful nuclear explosion agreements, which were concluded earlier this month after 18 months of highly technical negotiations.

For the first time since they exploded an atomic device, the Soviets have agreed to allow Americans on their territory to inspect large-scale peaceful explosions and make sure that they are not secret weapon tests.

There is an historic breakthrough for more certification procedures to insure that nuclear agreements are being lived up to. It is a good deal for the United States, and again I am proud of it.

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I intend to sign it in a simultaneous ceremony in the very near future.

Finally, we are continuing negotiations to reduce the NATO and Warsaw Pact forces that face each other all across central Europe. This is the only place where American and Russian ground forces are positioned literally eyeball-to-eyeball and thus involves the danger of triggering a direct confrontation.

The issues are very complex in these mutual and balanced reductions of forces talks which involve our allies in NATO and the members of the Warsaw Pact. Progress has been slow, but we intend to continue them because agreements would enhance military stability in Western and Eastern Europe at lower force levels. That would permit us to bring some of our troops home from Europe, as well as to reduce the level of allied forces on both sides.

Any agreements we reach in areas I have discussed will require Senate debate and ratification. Any suggestions that we are doing something in secret or not taking a tough line is just so much nonsense. We are as tough as anyone can be without junking the possibility of an agreement.

Whenever I get a good agreement for a safe world, you can be sure I won't pass it up for any political advantage or disadvantage.

Turning from direct arms negotiations with the Soviets, let's look for a moment at the Middle East. There we are determined to maintain the momentum of the Sinai agreement, in which the leaders of both Egypt and Israel trusted the United States sufficiently to take an historic first step toward a peace settlement after decades of distrust and four costly wars.

We have demonstrated our friendship and fairness toward a moderate Arab State, and at the same time strongly reaffirmed our commitment to the security and to the survival of Israel.

Only the United States can exercise such influence for peace and stability in this very volatile region, and I am proud of the progress that our country has contributed in this very difficult area.

Finally, there is Africa. It contains a wealth of resources and many newly independent nations. It commands the sea lanes of the South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean and the Soviets are interested in all these things.

When we tried by a relatively small amount of military aid without involving a single American soldier to help the two authentic elements in Angola against the Soviet-sponsored faction, Congress said no, you can't spend a penny to save Angola. That was last December.

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Our own political paralysis, the military success of Cuban mercenaries in Angola, an increased Soviet involvement accelerated the trends toward radicalism and violence in Southern Africa. So, I sent Secretary Kissinger on another mission. This time not to restore peace but to try to prevent a race war from breaking out.

The cooperative programs he proposed for economic aid were important, but more important was the message to black Africans that America cares, that we oppose domination of that continent by any outside power and that we support for their new nations the same principles we proclaim for our own 200 years ago -- self-determination, majority rule and the full protection of minority rights.

If anybody cautioned me that taking prompt diplomatic countermeasures to check Soviet involvement and Cuban adventurism in Southern Africa would have a political spinoff at home, I didn't listen very long. We did what was right, what was necessary and there was no time to lose.

So far, it has worked out well and Secretary Kissinger deserves credit instead of criticism.

I could list a lot of other foreign policy problems, and the daily decisions that they bring to the Oval Office, but the long and short of it is United States foreign policy is a tough job, one that goes on all the time and can't be put on the back burner every time we have one of our free elections every four years.

It isn't a job for babes, and it isn't a job for bullies. When I first became your President 22 months ago, I mentioned to all nations, friend and foe alike, an uninterrupted and sincere search for peace. I will neither retreat nor mark time nor shorten my stride in continuing that search.

I promised that America would remain strong and united, but that our strength would remain dedicated to the safety and to the sanity of the entire family of man, as well as to our own precious freedoms. The modernized and reinforced weapons systems I have proposed in my two record defense budgets will be dedicated to freedom and sanity as long as I am President.

I remember President Eisenhower saying that only the brave are strong and only the strong are free, and I also remember President Kennedy saying that cold January day we must never negotiate from fear, but we must never fear to negotiate.

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Whenever the United States has serious disagreements with other sovereign nations, we have really only two choices -- to fight about it or to talk about it. Threats are not only risky, but rather old-fashioned in today's world.

I will not hesitate to use force when it is clearly required to protect American lives and American interests, but I will make no threats I cannot carry out in full comprehension of the cost. Every President has that grave responsibility to the people that he serves.

I am proud of my leadership in the foreign policy of the United States. I intend to go on trying to do what is right for America and what is right for all mankind. We are at peace. No Americans are dying on any battlefield tonight. There are no international wars, though there are many areas of tension and serious danger.

We have suffered a few setbacks, tragic ones, and some disappointments in the course we have taken since World War II, but we have not had World War III. We have built a solid alliance of free peoples across the North Atlantic. We have made friends and partners of former foes in Europe as well as in Asia.

We are expanding trade and cooperation with the nations washed by the Pacific. We have strengthened our traditional ties with France, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America. Over the past 30 years since we came home from the Pacific and other theaters of war to make a better world, we have not blown up civilization and we have preserved our freedom.

There is more contact among peoples and more communications among Governments, a greater sharing of ideas, knowledge and cultural richness than ever before in the history of the entire world.

The levels of human help, learning and economic well being are rising almost everywhere.

Surely we must do something right, and I intend to go on working for a better world. Our adversaries are still determined to defeat us and bring all nations into conformity with their system in which almost any means are justified if they advance that ultimate victory.

But, we have no reason to fear their competition as long as we remain strong and true to our principles, our system, which has already proven its superiority in every way. As we must never lose our vigilance, neither must we ever lose our vision. Thank you very much.

I thank you very, very kindly, and I would now be glad to answer any questions from the audience for a few moments.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I have a question, please.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes?

QUESTION: Normalization of relations with the People's Republic of China was begun by your predecessor, and it is as of yet incomplete. The exchange of Ambassadors will certainly create many adverse reactions in certain areas, particularly with Moscow and the Taipei Government in Nationalist China. What, in the future, will your position be on this issue?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, in 1972 when we reopened the doors between China and the United States, a Shanghai communique was issued which called for the gradual movement of better relations, broader relations, deeper relations aiming at some point to normalization of relations.

I believe very strongly -- having been there in 1972, again having gone back in 1975 -- that it is important for the United States to have a broadened relationship with a nation that geographically is the largest in the world, and 800 million-some people.

The progress of that relationship is on schedule. It will continue on schedule as long as I am President. We will meet any of the problems you mentioned at the appropriate time, but so far the relationship is constructive, on schedule and, when we have any problems of the kind you are mentioning, we will meet them and handle them.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: Mr. President, Cornell and Harvard Universities have recently said a cure for spinal cord injuries is possible. I am sure that you will agree that research on spinal cord regeneration is desperately needed. The National Foundation for Paralytic Research is attempting to raise funds. Would you help us to walk again, people like us all over the world, by funding money to this very worthwhile cause?

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't hear the last part.

QUESTION: Would you help people like us all over the world to walk again by funding money for this very worthwhile cause?

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say, just the earlier part of this week I met in Washington with a young man -- he came from the West, I have forgotten his name -- who had a tragic injury, and he was selected as the young man or individual of the year to represent those like himself, as well as yourself. I indicated to him at that time that we had gotten the Veterans Administration, where many of these cases are treated, more money and we are putting a greater emphasis on that program in the VA.

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I hope that we can broaden our efforts. I am sure you are familiar with the fact that this young man went to the Soviet Union and had an operation there because they are allegedly further ahead in this area than we. He came back feeling that that operation conducted in Moscow had been helpful and beneficial to him.

So, that is one of the reasons why it is good for us to have an exchange, whether it is in medical matters or in cultural matters or in trade matters or anything else, and I can assure you that we, in the Executive Branch of the Government, will do all we can funding-wise and otherwise to help in the kind of a case you mention.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my question is that on May 12 the Chancellor of West Germany, Chancellor Schmidt, in the Bundestag, called for trade and economic policies of Heljmar Schacht. He was Financial Minister to Hitler and praised the economical policies of Hitler.

That hideous statement was not covered in the United States press. I am sure you are familiar with it. I wonder if you could please comment on that?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't think it is appropriate for me to involve myself in the internal political life of another country. I would have to, in addition, before commenting, if I did, read the whole text of what Chancellor Schmidt said and not a part, as indicated by you, because it might have been taken out of context.

QUESTION: Mr. President, I have a question about Africa -- in specific, Rhodesia. This last week there was an article in Time Magazine that had a commander in the Rhodesian army who made a statement that Kissinger was six months too late in Africa, in his addresses and so on and our policy there. If this statement is correct, why were we late?

THE PRESIDENT: We wouldn't have been late at all -- if we are late -- if the Congress had supported us with the minimal amount of money in letting us support the two, what I say were authentic Angolan forces -- the FNLA and the UNITA. But that tragedy did interfere with any efforts that we could make at an earlier date and, in addition, Secretary Kissinger went there not only for the purposes of trying to prevent the radicalization but also to present a very comprehensive program to the United Nations -- trade, and so forth, UNCTAD -- which he did, which was a very dramatic and I think a very constructive program, which was embraced by the leaders of virtually every one of the African nations.

So, it was a combination of circumstances -- one, the situation in Angola; and secondly, the scheduled meeting of the UMPA organization. There was nothing deliberate on our part. It was simply a circumstance beyond our control. I don't believe, however -- or don't agree, I should say -- with the observation of the Rhodesian that you quote because I think we have gotten a moderate African nation to turn back from radicalism and come back to a responsible position, and I think we have blunted the most radical elements in Southern Africa, and the situation is infinitely better today than it was six months ago.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, I have resided in the City of Portland for more than 40 years. I am a citizen of this great nation, which I am very proud of, and I am Honorary Councilman for the Republic of Lebanon for the last 20 years. All my life that I have been in this great nation I have been commended for the beautiful Lebanon sculpture and everything that goes with it.

I am sure you are aware of it. It just breaks my heart and I know every American that I know in this city here, they call me, they see me, they see the news in the paper and just don't know what to say to me. What are we doing in a country that has been pro-western, pro-United States that would let that country be destroyed little by little?

I would appreciate a comment on that, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: You are exactly right. The tragedy in Lebanon is one of the saddest situations that has taken place in my lifetime. Up until a year or a year and a half ago Lebanon was the epitome of stability and strength. It was the most secure and prosperous nations in the Middle East by any standards.

You know as well, if not better than I, that there has been a very arbitrary division between the Muslims and the Christians within their Government. The President had to be of one faith and the Vice President had to be of another faith.

The situation began to deteriorate and then outside forces began to involve themselves and the net result was we have had about 20,000 killings. It is just sad, but it got on a roller coaster and about six weeks ago I sent one of our most able retired Ambassadors, who just retired about a year ago -- Dean Brown -- over there to see what we could do in an affirmative way to bring the Christians and the Muslims together and to try to keep all outside forces away from this situation.

He was there. He had contact with President Franjiah. He had contact with all of the other elements and we were successful in restraining the Syrians from coming in in any major force, and if they had come in in a major force, I am certain that the Israelis would have countered with a major force of their own.

So, we had to keep Syria out as best we could with any regular forces. We had to keep Israel out because that would have countered with a major force of their own.

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So, we had to keep Syria out as best we could with any regular forces. We had to keep Israel out because that would have ignited another Syrian-Israeli war. We, I think, have gotten the best and seemingly the most permanent cease-fire. The net result is that perhaps the newly elected President, Mr. Sarkis, will be able to take over and we hope that Mr. Jumblatt will support him. We hope that the Syrians will give some support; the Israelis will stay out.

There have been some newspaper stories today which you may or may not have read to the effect that the new Lebanese Government has asked that the French send in a very limited force to help stabilize the situation until a central Government can be re-established. Whether that will take place or not, I can't tell you, but we have a new President, we are hoping that they can establish a viable central Government that the outside forces will stay out.

I could go on with the complexities because you have the Egyptians favoring one element of the Palestinians and the Syrians favoring another element of the Palestinians, and you have the Israelis involved indirectly.

It is the most complex situation today I think in the world. Slowly but surely we are making -- I don't mean we alone -- but substantial headway is being made, and I just hope with patience and perseverance we can sort it all out and restore Lebanon to the great role that it had for a good many years.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President.

QUESTION: Mr. President, my name is not important, but my question is. What will be the role of covert intelligence operations in U.S. foreign policy in the future?

THE PRESIDENT: I believe under the reorganization of the intelligence community, which includes the CIA, the Defense Intelligence Agency and any other intelligence departments in our Government, the reorganization that I instituted to guarantee the protection of individual rights and that there will be a central control of the intelligence community with a group of three that will have supervisory responsibilities for any criticisms or any objections, will take care of the overall intelligence operations. That is on the affirmative side.

Now, you asked the question, in effect, should the United States undertake any covert operations. In my opinion yes, if it involves our national security.

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. President. We have time for one more question.

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QUESTION: Mr. President, may I ask you to state your stand, please, on the controversial Panama Canal issue?

THE PRESIDENT: Following the riots that resulted in 24 deaths in December of 1964, where 20 Panamanians and 4 Americans were killed, President Johnson undertook negotiations with the Government of Panama to see what could be done to negotiate a long-term treaty that would involve, during the terms of the treaty, the United States having defense responsibilities and the right to maintain and operate the Canal. Those negotiations continued under President Johnson during his term of office and likewise under President Nixon. They are still continuing.

I believe that the United States should negotiate an affirmative agreement that will make certain that our national interests are protected and that we have the right of free access to the Panama Canal.

Now, there are some who say we should break off negotiations. I think that would be foolhardy because it is inevitable, if those negotiations were terminated, that we would have a resumption of the riots that took place in 1964. It is inevitable there would be sabotage of the Canal and every military leader that I have talked to says that sabotage of the Canal is a very easy military operation. It is inevitable that every Latin American country -- 25, with some 309 million Latin Americans -- would be on the side of the Panamanians and against us. And inevitably there would be riots and bloodshed.

We can avoid that if we negotiate a responsible Canal treaty of long-term duration well into the next century and, in the meantime, we keep our national defense needs and requirements so that they are protected. And, as long as I am President, they will be protected.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. President.

END (AT 9:13 P.M. PDT)