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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE BIENNIAL B'NAI B'RITH CONVENTION
WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL
September 9, 1976

I am honored to address this convention saluting both the 133rd year of B'Nai B'Rith and the 200th anniversary of the United States of America. You, the sons and daughters of the covenant, have kept your commitment to Judaism and to America.

As one of America's pioneer voluntary agencies, your seven candles have generated tremendous light and warmth and love.

The glow of your compassion illuminates the best of our Nation's traditional spirit of voluntary service to others.

Your devotion to family virtues and values makes me proud to serve as President of the great American family in which the Jewish community is a cherished member.

As America celebrates its 200th Anniversary, there is a new maturity to our national pride. There is a new awareness that ours is a Nation of many faiths and denominations -- Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and others -- all equally honored and all equally separated and protected from government by the Constitution of the United States.

A new optimism grows from self-confidence and mutual trust, and from a reliable, stable, enduring philosophy of government.

Just as B'Nai B'Rith honors a sacred covenant, so does our Nation -- at home and abroad. Ours is a covenant with freedom.

As descendants of those who found sanctuary and fulfillment in this great land, we know that freedom is indivisible. Tyranny and terrorism abroad endanger freedom at home. We are our brother's keeper.

Our own Bicentennial Independence Day was enhanced by an event that day at Entebbe Airport in Uganda.

I refer to the daring rescue of the hostages.

That action of liberation freed our own hearts to fuller understanding of the universal meaning of independence -- and the courageous action sometimes required to preserve it.

A free people must never capitulate to terrorism.

That is why I long ago asked for mandatory prison sentences for airplane hijackers.

Certainty of punishment prevents crime. I support international action to stamp out terrorism wherever it may occur.

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America has always been a land of new beginnings.

Our ancestors, who came to these shores, made a new beginning. They saw America as a promised land.

As we approach the Jewish New Year, many Americans sense that we are making a new start in our national life.

Something wonderful happened to America in the last two years. Together, we transcended a time of torment at home and abroad, military involvements and economic threats, assassinations and wrongdoing in high places. We recaptured the spirit of 1776.

We believe anew in the hopes of our revolutionary founders and our immigrant ancestors. We find new meaning in their vision of free men and free women enjoying limited government and unlimited opportunity.

We renew our commitment to the proposition that we are responsible for those less fortunate than ourselves.

We know that the United States of America is sound. We are secure. We are on the march to full economic recovery, and a better quality of life for all Americans.

America's salvation is not in a revival of discredited social experiments financed by you who pay the taxes and obey the laws. I see no excuse for arbitrary quotas on the basis of race, religion, or national origin in employment and education.

In the name of justice for some, we must not do injustice to others.

Opportunities should be open to all Americans on an equal basis. That is basic to the finest American principles of liberty and justice for all.

When I became President two years ago, I pledged to be President to all of the people. I renew that pledge today and support it, not with vague plans and vacillating promises, but with a proven record of performance.

Two years ago, the scene was grim. Could we muster the unity and will to overcome our domestic turmoil? Could we stand up for freedom?

We not only could but we did.

Today, not a single American is at war anywhere on the face of this earth.

America is at peace and seeks peace for all countries.

Two years ago there were mounting tensions between the Arab states and Israel. Pessimism prevailed. Another war seemed inevitable.

Look what has happened. The United States has helped bring about a momentum towards peace that has no parallel in Middle East history. Every American can stand up with pride for what this country helped to do. Two agreements were reached for the separation of forces on the Egyptian and Syrian fronts.

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Buffer zones were created to protect against surprise attack -- and every war between Israel and its neighbors has grown out of surprise attack, or fear of it.

The forces of moderation -- leaders who were willing to commit themselves to the peace process -- were strengthened. The disruptive role of those opposed to the peace process has steadily declined.

The United States has fashioned new institutions of energy cooperation with its major allies, including contingency measures to safeguard against a new oil embargo.

America's important contacts with the Arab world grew again. The resettlement of cities along the Suez Canal, and the clearing of the Canal for international traffic, gave practical evidence of a turn towards peace.

Then, just a year ago, came the Sinai Agreement. This was a dramatic milestone. It was the first Arab-Israeli agreement that was not just an armistice in the aftermath of hostilities. It was a political as well as military step; it was intended by both sides as a significant advance toward peace.

In that agreement both Egypt and Israel pledged:

-- that "the conflict between them and in the Middle East shall not be resolved by military force but by peaceful means";

-- that "they are determined to reach a final and just peace settlement by means of negotiations called by Security Council Resolution 338"; and

-- that they will "not...resort to the threat or use of force or military blockade against each other".

The danger of war and destruction was further reduced for both sides.

Not a single young Israeli or young Egyptian has since died fighting each other in the Sinai.

There is no precedent for the promise of lasting and just peace in the Middle East which this agreement has opened up. Both Prime Minister Rabin and President Sadat hailed the agreement as a possible turning point.

Prime Minister Rabin, who has been my personal friend since he was Ambassador here and I was in Congress, reported to his Parliament on June 15:

"I note with satisfaction that during the past two years relations between the United States and Israel have become closer.

"Our governments have arrived at a common approach regarding the desirable political direction on the road to peace and in the development of the processes of peace...there has been no erosion in the position and the attitude of the Administration, the Congress, and the American public, towards Israel.

"Relations between the United States and Israel remain firm...it will never be superfluous to emphasize and re-emphasize the feeling of gratitude and appreciation that the people, the Knesset and the government in Israel maintain towards the United States for its stand on Israel's side."

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The negotiating process will continue. The progress made has withstood the dangerous conflict in Lebanon, and I believe it helped to prevent that tragic warfare from spilling over into a wider conflagration.

I intend to pursue further progress, because it is right for America, right for Israel, right for the Arabs, indeed right for all the peoples of the world.

I do not promise you it will be easy.

I can tell you what I will do.

-- There will be no imposed solutions -- but agreements whose terms are hammered out between the parties as in the Sinai Agreement.

-- There will be no one-sided concessions -- but a political quid pro quo in exchange for what is given up.

-- We will proceed, as we did before, in the closest constant consultation with Israel before, during and after any negotiations.

A strong Israel is essential to peace and to the national security interests of the United States. From the time I first ran for Congress in 1948, I recognized the justice of Israel's rebirth and its importance to the United States.

I am proud to stand on my consistent 28-year record of support for Israel. You all know where I stand.

The funds I proposed for Israel in my first two budgets totalled over four billion dollars for 27 months. These figures speak more eloquently than words.

I am proud that my ambassadors at the United Nations have stood up and spoken out for the elementary principle of fairness that Americans believe in.

I tell you now that we will fight any measure that condemns Zionism as racism or that attempts to deny Israel her full rights of membership in the United Nations.

The United States will stand firm in its commitment to Israel's security and survival.

America's policy of peace through strength has proven itself in the Middle East and throughout the world. Nobody questions our dedication to peace. And nobody doubts our willingness to use our strength when America's vital interests are at stake.

A strong defense is the best insurance for peace. But our strength has never rested upon arms alone. It is rooted in our mutual commitment to the highest standards of ethics and morality.

Take the Arab boycott for example. This involves both moral and legal questions, domestic as well as international issues. It is easy to escalate emotionally but not nearly so easy to resolve rationally.

I opposed Arab boycott practices when I was in Congress. I have always opposed discrimination.

America was born as a refuge from discrimination.

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As President, I have taken the strongest executive action in American history against foreign economic practices that discriminate against American citizens.

Last November I set forth a detailed program of administrative orders and regulations, now in force, which prohibit any discrimination in export transactions based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin.

The United States' moral and legal opposition to the Arab boycott of Israel has been made forcefully clear not only to foreign governments but to the American business community.

This campaign, together with careful diplomacy and the efforts of individual U.S. firms, has resulted in the easing of boycott practices and an effective end to open discrimination.

This morning I want to reiterate my determination to make further progress so that government officials at all levels and the American people will understand that I mean business.

A moral and ethical government promises its citizens no more than it can deliver --- and delivers all that it promises. For too long, the American people have been promised panaceas for which we are still paying in credibility and in cash.

My record is one of performance, not promises.

My record is one of realism, not rhetoric.

My record is one of experience, not expediency.

In a national election, candidates will naturally disagree on political philosophy. That is why I was delighted when Mr. Carter accepted my challenge for nationally televised debates on the real issues.

It is still my fervent hope that this campaign will be pursued in keeping with the best American traditions. America has no place for those who would set brother against brother, group against group, American against American.

America did not rise to the heights we have achieved by catering to fear and prejudice. We succeeded through courage, decency, common sense --- and the compelling knowledge that we are all equal in the eyes of God.

My Administration will go on working for a better world. We have absolutely no reason to fear our adversaries abroad as long as we remain strong and true to our principles. Our system has proven its superiority in every way. In remaining vigilant, we must never abandon our vision or our spiritual values.

"Let us," in the words of the New Testament, "follow after the things which make for peace."

We must heed the Old Testament which urges us all to "seek peace, and pursue it."

As we must never lose our vigilance, neither must we ever lose our vision.

Thank you very much.

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