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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
TO THE
BIENNIAL CONVENTION OF B'NAI B'RITH

WASHINGTON HILTON HOTEL

9:40 A.M. EDT

David, Ambassador Dinitz, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

At the outset, let me express my deep gratitude and appreciation for that more than generous introduction. And I understand, David, that you are unopposed this year in your campaign for the presidency of B'nai B'rith. David, you will have to tell me how you do it. (Laughter)

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. 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 light and warmth and love.

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 of which the Jewish community is a cherished member.

I have been meeting with B'nai B'rith for more than a quarter of a century and always understood that you were a non-partisan organization. I had prepared an appropriately non-partisan speech for this morning. But, when I saw the morning papers (Laughter) I was disappointed to see that one of your speakers yesterday apparently kicked off our debates from this rostrum. As a matter of fact, I originally proposed that our first subject be defense and foreign policy and that it should be held yesterday, September 8. Mr. Carter rejected this arrangement. I guess he did not want me to be present. Well, I got here as quickly as I could. (Laughter) Without objection, I would like my turn at the plate.

Number one, Mr. Carter told you, "I have called for closer ties with our traditional allies and stronger ties with the state of Israel." I say to you, Israel is one of our traditional allies and our ties have never been closer or stronger.

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As for our other allies, the gentleman has proposed troop withdrawals from Western Europe and from Korea; defense budget cuts that would cripple our ability to supply or sustain our friends; bans on nuclear tests by our allies; a nuclear strategy of massive retaliation -- policies which would invite a major crisis with our allies, including Israel.

Number two, Mr. Carter told you, and I quote, "I have stressed the necessity for a strong defense, tough and muscular, adequate to maintain our freedom under any conceivable circumstances." I say to you, the gentleman on other occasions has advocated defense cuts of \$5 billion to \$7 billion, delaying our strategic bomber program, withdrawing from overseas bases and cutting off military aid to vital allies. I say to you, if we do any or all of these things it would be impossible to have a defense adequate to maintain our freedom and the freedom of our friends.

Finally, I seem to recall that the shepherd boy David was both tough and muscular. It is a good thing. He also had the most advanced weapon system of that day.

Number three, the gentleman told you "We have allowed virtually unlimited sales of arms to countries around the world, a policy as cynical as it is dangerous." I tell you, most of our arms sales in military aid goes to key countries like Israel and Iran. I assume he is not proposing to cut off Israel.

Does the gentleman want Soviet arms to have a monopoly in the world? Does he want our adversaries to arm not only the radical Arabs but also the more moderate Arabs? Does Mr. Carter honestly consider his own country's bipartisan policies more cynical and less moral than the Soviet Union's?

And now, back to my nice non-partisan speech.

As American celebrates its 200th anniversary, there is a new maturity in 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.

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A fresh 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.

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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 very strongly urged international action to stamp out terrorism wherever it may occur.

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 know that we are making a new start in our national life.

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

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

We renew our commitment to 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 outdated social experiments financed by you who pay the taxes and obey the laws. I see no excuse whatsoever for arbitrary quotas on the basis of race, religion or national origin in employment or education.

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

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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.

Look what has happened in the Middle East. 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.

Buffer zones were created to protect against a surprise attack -- and every war between Israel and Egypt, its Arab 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 cooperations 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, 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 a military step; it was intended by both sides as a significant advance towards peace.

In that agreement both Egypt and Israel pledged:

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-- 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 for by the Security Council Resolution 338"; and

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

As a result, the danger of war and destruction was further reduced by both sides.

Not a single Israeli or a single young Egyptian has since died fighting 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 believe the agreement is the possible turning point.

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

"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 in 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 toward the United States for its stand on Israel's side."

The negotiation 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.

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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 throughout this 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 balanced quid pro quo in exchange for everything given up.

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

A strong Israel is essential to peace and to the national security in 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 know where I stand.

The funds I proposed for Israel in my first two budgets totaled over \$4 billion 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.

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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 -- and we will.

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 as an 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 the Congress. I have always opposed discrimination.

America was born as a refuge from discrimination.

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.

Our 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 reiterate my determination to make further progress, if necessary by legislation, so that Government officials at all levels and the American people will know that I mean business.

And I can tell you, I will continue to seek further progress on the issue of emigration from the Soviet Union. I raised it personally with General Secretary Brezhnev. I have discussed it on many occasions with my former colleagues in the House and in the Senate, with the determination to restore the prior rate of emigration.

As a Government and as a Nation, we continue to stress the importance attached by all Americans to the basic human right to live where one chooses in this world today.

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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.

Under our system in a national election, candidates will naturally disagree on political philosophy. That is why I was delighted when Mr. Carter accepted my challenge for a nationally televised debate on the real issues facing 215 million Americans.

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 by catering to fear and to prejudice. We succeeded through courage, decency, common sense. 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.

In the words of the New Testament, "Let us follow after the things which make for peace," heeding still the Old Testament which encourages us to seek peace and pursue it.

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

Thank you very much.

END

(AT 10:10 A.M. EDT)