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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT
NORTH AMERICAN ROCKWELL
B-1 DIVISION

9:35 A.M. PDT

Bob, Congressman Rousselot, Congressman Moorhead,
ladies and gentlemen:

Let me at the outset congratulate you, Bob, and the B-1 Division of the Rockwell International. It is a great privilege and a very high honor for me to have the opportunity of being here with you today.

Last night, as some of you may know, I engaged in a very serious discussion about the need for maintaining a strong national defense. My opponent and I differ on how to go about that process. One of those differences is represented by the model that you work on, that I have just seen, and I think it is a crucial issue in this campaign.

But first, let me congratulate all of you for winning the Zero Defect Award. I am glad you are not working for the Carter campaign. (Laughter) I might say parenthetically that there are a lot of defects to chose in that campaign, but one of the biggest of Mr. Carter's defects is his opposition to the B-1 bomber.

As you and I meet this morning, thousands of American servicemen all around the globe are standing watch, some patrolling borders, some sailing a ship and some manning our aircraft. As Commander-in-Chief, I am responsible for each one of them. We owe each one of those young Americans not just our support and our prayers -- we owe them the very best equipment that this country can buy.

Our current manned bomber, the B-52, is already more than 20 years old, and by the time the B-1 is ready to take its place the B-52 will be in operation over four decades. I don't believe that any President should ask any serviceman to defend his country in a combat aircraft that is older than he is.

Last night, we both agreed on the need for toughness in facing the Soviet Union.

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(OVER)

But toughness requires more than talk. It requires having the right weapons systems. If we want peace in the world, we have to let our enemies know we are willing to defend the peace. They may or they may not understand that in English, but this B-1 is the message that they will clearly understand.

The B-1 is one of the clearest examples as to what is at stake in this campaign. My opponent either favors the cancelling or the delay of the B-1. His running mate in the Senate, Senator Mondale, voted against the B-1 in the Senate no less than three times. They say the B-1 is unnecessary. I certainly hope and pray that is true, but what if those critics are wrong?

The very fact that we don't have the B-1 could well invite a challenge from abroad. If we are wrong about buying the B-1, the cost will be measured in dollars and cents. If we are wrong about not buying the B-1, the cost could well be measured in lives and in blood.

As President, I will not take the chance. Our children will live in a future where Soviet technology poses an increasing threat to the security of the United States. The B-1 bomber provides graphic proof to our friends and to our enemies that 200 years have not diminished America's commitment to freedom.

The B-1 bomber is not the only major difference in this campaign. Another fundamental critical issue is the proper size of America's defense budget. The issue is simple. Our opponent wants to cut it. We want to keep intact and keep it strong.

Over the last year and a half, our opponent has cited various figures as to how much the defense budget ought to be cut. About a year ago, Mr. Carter said it could be cut \$15 billion. A few months ago he changed and said it could be cut \$7 to \$9 billion, and now the figure they use is \$5 to \$7 billion.

They are vague about the place where those cuts could be made, but the realities of manpower needs and pension requirements and many, many other fixed costs insure that a cut of that magnitude -- whether it is 15, or 7 to 9, or 5 to 7 -- would have to come from weapon system procurement. That would be a strategic tragedy for America. It would be an economic tragedy for the State of California and other States which do the research and development and build this wonderful weapon system.

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Our opponent's platform amounts to an overall policy of "Fire them and hire them." First, \$5 to \$7 billion in defense cuts would put you and thousands and thousands of others out of work. Then the Humphrey-Hawkins bill would try to put you back to work in dead-end public service jobs. That formula would be a triple disaster. It would mean less defense, it would mean less real employment, it would mean more taxes and more inflation.

Our opponents have managed to turn the words of President Teddy Roosevelt upside down. Some of you may recall that Teddy Roosevelt once said, "Speak softly and carry a big stick." Our opponent wants to speak loudly and carry a fly swatter.

Such an attitude is a danger to our military and diplomatic stability abroad and to our economic stability here in America. World peace depends on continued American military strength. Over the years, the workers of California have played a vital role in maintaining that strength and keeping that peace.

You have done a great job. In the next four years I am going to see that you keep right on doing it.

Thank you, and congratulations.

END (AT 9:45 A.M. PDT)