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THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO BE DELIVERED TO THE
PITTSBURGH ECONOMIC CLUB

GRAND BALLROOM
PITTSBURGH HILTON HOTEL

Some 20 years ago, speaking before the League of Women Voters, President Eisenhower was asked about the goals of United States foreign policy.

"The foreign policy of our nation is not difficult to state," he said. "We are for peace -- peace first, last and always."

Today that remains the central purpose of American foreign policy. It has been the purpose of every Administration since I went to Washington more than a quarter of a century ago.

In fact, looking back over those years, through the terms of six Presidents -- three Democrats and three Republicans -- you will find that while the emphasis may have changed from one Administration to the next, the foundations of American foreign policy have remained essentially the same.

There have been misjudgments. Sometimes we have made commitments that have exceeded our capabilities. Sometimes we have been heavy-handed. But the record of achievement far exceeds that of failure.

Throughout my time as President, I have shaped our foreign policy according to these four basic principles:

- First, we have sought to maintain America's unquestioned military strength;
- Second, we have tried to maintain and strengthen our friendships with our allies;
- Third, working from a position of strength, we have sought to reduce tensions in the world and to avert the threat of a nuclear holocaust;
- Finally, we have tried to act as leader and as peacemaker in resolving the many difficult problems that have arisen within a community of nations that has been constantly expanding.

There is no better testimony to the wisdom of our policies than the fact that today America is at peace. Not a single one of our men is fighting or dying on any foreign battlefield. The draft no longer hangs over the heads of the younger generation.

Today America is strong, ready to meet any challenge to our security. Our relationships with our allies have never been better -- a point that has been echoed repeatedly as leaders of other nations have streamed to our shores to share in our Bicentennial celebration. And our adversaries respect us; they respect our commitment to freedom and they respect our strength and our will to protect it.

The peace that exists today is directly related to our collective hard work and skillful diplomacy. I am very proud of what we have accomplished. I am very proud to be the first President since Dwight Eisenhower to seek election with America at peace.

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What now concerns me is that during the closing weeks of this Presidential campaign, it has become apparent that America is now being asked by my opponent to make a fundamental change in the direction and conduct of U. S. foreign policy. As citizens and as voters, you are being asked to decide whether you wish to build on the great traditions of American foreign policy--the traditions that can keep us strong and at peace--or whether you wish to break from those traditions, venturing into the unknown with a doctrine that is untested, untried, and in my view, potentially dangerous.

This doctrine deviates substantially from the solid principles of the bipartisan foreign and defense policies of the past 30 years. It has a strong flavor of isolationism. If it is applied in practice in the same way that it is described in campaign oratory, there is a significant risk it could lead to major international crises. Let us look a few moments at the most significant differences between the policies of my Administration and those that are offered as an alternative.

During the two and a half years of my Presidency, I have fought hard to strengthen our national defense. When I took office, defense spending was a smaller share of the national budget than at any time since before the Korean War. We were at the razor's edge in defense strength. If the Congress had continued cutting our defense budgets, we would assuredly have drifted into a position of military inferiority.

One of the most significant achievements of this Administration is that we have now reversed that slide. And as long as I am President, we are going to have an Army, a Navy, an Air Force and a Marine Corps that are unsurpassed in military capability. I know it is costly. As President Eisenhower once said, "A good defense is never a cheap defense." But for the sake of peace and freedom we must be willing to make the sacrifices that maintain America's military might.

Now consider the alternative that is being offered to the American people in this election. Instead of maintaining our military strength, the alternative proposed is to slash billions from our defense budget, stripping us not of waste but of military muscle. The B-1 bomber is a prime example. I believe it is essential to our security to go forward with production of this new aircraft which has met and surpassed every test to date. It would replace the aging B-52, so that our pilots can defend America in aircraft that give us a reliable capability for penetrating improved air defense systems of our potential adversaries. So the differences in defense spending are clear: I want to continue on a course which I believe will keep us strong and free; the alternative is to head down a road which could raise doubts about our strength and determination on the part of our friends and potential adversaries.

A second basic principle of America's policy is to maintain strong, durable relationships with our allies.

When I took office, America was in the midst of a constitutional crisis. We were still suffering from the bitterness of Vietnam. And we were faced with a deteriorating economy. The world was watching to see if we would recover. They knew it was critical to their own future, because if America became mired in self-doubts, then the peace of the world would be jeopardized.

I am proud of our record during this period of testing:

- We have led the world out of the most dangerous recession since the 1930's and launched our economic recovery without producing another round of devastating inflation.

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- The economic comeback of the industrialized democracies is being accomplished not with the beggar-thy-neighbor policies of the 1930s but with an unprecedented degree of cooperation, as witnessed by the Summit Meetings in France and Puerto Rico of the leading industrial democracies.
- In Europe, we have injected new vigor into the Atlantic alliance. We have successfully resisted Congressional pressures to reduce our NATO troop commitments, we have worked closely with our allies on the energy crisis, on the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, on economic policies and on coordinating our approaches to East-West diplomacy. The alliance in Europe has never been stronger.
- We have also made significant progress in the Middle East. The United States stands staunchly by Israel, supplying in just two years time over 40% of all U. S. aid to that country since its founding in 1949. At the same time, we have earned the respect and confidence of the Arab nations. Today, the United States is the only major leader trusted by both sides in the Middle East; they want our leadership, and we will continue to provide it.
- We can also look to Asia with new confidence today. We now enjoy the strongest links ever with Japan. This was symbolized by the first visit ever of the Emperor to the U. S. and my own visit to his homeland -- the first visit to Japan by an American President.

We have remained steadfast in the Korean peninsula. We have put the Vietnam war behind us in a way which has protected our essential interest and maintained America's respect in that part of the world.

- We have opened the door to better relations with China.

Now let us look at the alternative that is being offered in this election.

- Instead of holding firm in Asia, we are told that we should pull our troops and major weapons systems out of Korea -- an invitation to disaster not only there but in Japan as well.
- In Europe, we are told that we should not "close the door" to consultations and "friendships" with the communist leaders of Italy, France and Portugal. I am deeply concerned over the impact that such an approach would have upon the democratic parties that have, for decades, waged a struggle to preserve freedom against communist tyranny.
- In the Middle East, the alternative appears distinctly hostile to our friendships with moderate Arab states. I can tell you from experience that such a total departure from current policies could drive these countries into the arms of the Soviets, threatening the stability of the area and eventually inflicting enormous harm upon the very country that it purports to help, the State of Israel.

Let us look now at still another basic principle of our foreign policy: to reduce tensions with our adversaries and reduce the threat of nuclear war.

Over the past two years, we have taken significant strides down the path toward halting and reversing the strategic arms spiral. Early in my Administration I met with General Secretary Brezhnev in Vladivostok, where we pledged our mutual efforts to reach a new agreement limiting nuclear armaments. Today an agreement embodying the Vladivostok accords is 90% complete. I am confident that it can be successfully concluded in the near future, and that we can work for even further reductions in nuclear weapons. When that agreement is reached, the prospects for reducing the dangers of a nuclear holocaust will brighten around the world.

But let us never forget American Presidents have learned that tough talk by itself is insufficient; it is too easily dismissed as bombast. Our rhetoric must be backed by substance, a strong national defense, strong alliances, and strong diplomacy.

In place of a strong defense, the alternative called for in this election is a weakened defense. In place of strong alliances, we are offered troop pullbacks and sweeping reviews of America's commitments to its allies. In place of the strategic arms agreement at Vladivostok--which provides for equal numbers at a level requiring Soviet reductions--the alternative proposed is a freeze at current levels. This major step backward would lock us into force levels which for the Soviet Union would be higher than agreed at Vladivostok and for the United States significantly lower.

In the past, American Presidents have always known they should never say in advance precisely what course of action this country would take in the event of an international crisis. The reason for such an approach ought to be obvious enough. When a potential adversary knows what you will and won't do in advance, your flexibility is limited and his is increased. He can probe with impunity or redirect his efforts at more tempting targets. The acquisition of knowledge about such intentions in advance is one of the major reasons why countries spend vast sums for intelligence activities. Thus, it was with some surprise that I heard a specific proposal for total economic warfare against the Arabs in the event of another oil embargo. I thought such a statement of a specific course of action in advance was a singular mistake which, once made, would not be repeated. I was, therefore, surprised to hear him make the same mistake at Williamsburg in his ill-advised comments concerning what he might or might not do if the future security of Yugoslavia was threatened. Statements of this kind, as we learned over twenty-five years ago, instead of serving the cause of peace, invite conflict. They invite aggression rather than deter it. I have to assume that this statement simply reflects inexperience.

Ladies and gentlemen: Even though America is at peace today, we must recognize that we continue to live in a dangerous world--a world hostile to freedom. Unrest is still seething in many parts of the globe.

The challenge to American diplomacy during these next four years will be equal to any other period in our lifetime. We must complete negotiations on a SALT agreement to replace the current treaty, which expires in October of 1977. We must continue our efforts to defuse the powderkeg in Southern Africa. We must work to achieve a just, stable peace in the Middle East. We must restore prosperity. And we must deal intelligently and compassionately with the new agenda of world issues such as nuclear proliferation, economic interdependence, food, energy, pollution, and growing populations.

We can succeed in these tasks only if we remain true to the great principles that have guided United States foreign policy for more than a quarter of a century.

This is not a time to weaken to our own defense, to refuse to equip our troops with essential new weapons, to undermine democratic leaders by hinting at new relationships with communist leaders in Western Europe, to withdraw our troops from South Korea, to upset the balance in the Middle East, or to concede such nations as Yugoslavia to the Soviet sphere.

This is a time to benefit from and build upon the wisdom we have inherited.

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The peace we enjoy today is not an accident.

The peace we have today is a product of the patient diplomacy and the determination of the past.

To preserve the peace, we must be willing to pay the price for a mighty military force.

To preserve the peace, we must be willing to shoulder the burdens of our alliances and friendships.

To preserve the peace, we must be tough-minded and persistent in dealing with our adversaries. Never -- not once -- can we drop our guard.

To preserve the peace, we must apply the enormous talent and technology of America to advancing gains made in far-flung corners of the world, stretching from the Middle East to Africa.

To preserve the peace, we must be generous and compassionate toward others less fortunate than ourselves.

Finally, to preserve the peace, we must be true to the ideals of America -- to our love of freedom and dignity and justice for all humankind.

These are my goals as your President. They are the goals of a great nation. With your help, with your prayers, I will continue their pursuit during the next four years. And I pledge to you today, that as long as I am your President, I will never let you down.

Thank you.

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