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JULY 17, 1975

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

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THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS  
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT  
AND

THOMAS P. STAFFORD  
DONALD SLAYTON  
VANCE D. BRAND  
ALEXEI LEONOV

AND

VALERIY KUBASOV  
THE CREW OF THE  
APOLLO-SOYUZ SPACE MISSION

THE OVAL OFFICE

3:37 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Gentlemen, let me call to express my very great admiration for your hard work, your total dedication in preparing for this first joint flight.

All of us here in Washington and in the United States send to you our very warmest congratulations for your successful rendezvous and for your docking, and we wish you the very best for a successful completion of the remainder of your mission.

Your flight is a momentous event and a very great achievement, not only for the five of you, but also for the thousands of American and Soviet scientists and technicians who have worked together for three years to insure the success of this very historic and very successful experiment in international cooperation.

It has taken us many years to open this door to useful cooperation in space between our two countries, and I am confident that the day is not far off when space missions made possible by this first joint effort will be more or less commonplace.

We all look forward to your safe return, and we follow with great interest the success so far, and we look forward to talking with you on earth again, when you do end your flight.

MORE

General Stafford, Tom, now that you have had an opportunity to test the new docking system, do you think it will be suitable for future international manned space flight?

MR. STAFFORD: Yes, Mr. President, I sure do. Out of the three docking systems I have used, this was the smoothest one so far. It works beautifully.

THE PRESIDENT: About three and a half hours ago I sat here in the Oval Office and watched the docking procedure. It looked awfully simple from here. I am sure it was not that simple for the five of you.

Let me say a word or two, if I might, to Colonel Leonov. The docking was a critical phase of the joint mission.

Colonel, could you describe it, and would you describe the reaction of the crews on meeting in space after such a long preparation?

MR. LEONOV: Mr. President, I am sure that our joint flight is the beginning for future explorations in space between our countries.

Thank you very much for very nice words to us. We will do our best.

THE PRESIDENT: Colonel, I think you and the other four have done very, very well so far, and may I congratulate you and your associates on this great achievement.

Now, Dr. Slayton, Deke, you have had a very, very long record of distinguished service, preparing other astronaut crews for various space missions, and we are extremely pleased to see you on the crew of the first international manned space flight.

As the world's oldest space rookie, do you have any advice for young people who hope to fly on future space missions?

Deke, did you have a chance to hear my question?

MR. SLAYTON: No, sir, Mr. President, unfortunately.

THE PRESIDENT: Can I repeat it?

MORE

MR. SLAYTON: Tom just repeated it for me, sir.

Yes, I have a lot of advice for young people, but I guess probably one of the most important bits is to, number one, decide what you really want to do and then, secondly, never give up until you have done it.

THE PRESIDENT: You are a darn good example, Deke, of never giving up and continuing. I know it is a great feeling of success from your point of view to have made this flight and to be on board with your four associates.

MR. SLAYTON: Yes, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Vance Brand, I know that you are still in the Apollo and holding the fort there. It has been my observation that the crews on both sides have worked very hard to learn either Russian on the one hand or English on the other.

Has this training period, which is so important, stood the test in the complicated procedures that all of you must execute in this very delicate mission?

MR. BRAND: Mr. President, I believe it really has. I think in a way our project and, in particular, the training that we have undergone has been sort of a model for future similar projects.

I think it has been a real pleasant experience to work on learning Russian and to be able to work with the cosmonauts, and I think we will have some ideas that would probably help people in the future on similar paths.

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much, Vance.

I might like to say a word or two to Valeriy Kubasov, the other member of the cosmonaut crew. I might say to him, as well as Colonel Leonov, I remember both of you on that enjoyable Saturday last September when both crews visited the White House and joined me in a picnic over in Virginia.

We flew from the White House over to this picnic just across the river. We had some crab specialties that I enjoyed, and I think you did.

I am sure you are having a little different menu, somewhat different food on this occasion. What are you having over there out in space?

MORE

MR. LEONOV: We get good space food. There is no Russian food, no Russian music, some juice, some coffee, and a lot of water, no beer.

THE PRESIDENT: Let me say in conclusion we look forward to your safe return. It has been a tremendous demonstration of cooperation between our scientists, our technicians and, of course, our astronauts and their counterparts, the cosmonauts from the Soviet Union.

I congratulate everybody connected with the flight, and particularly the five of you who are setting this outstanding example of what we have to do in the future to make it a better world.

May I say in signing off, here is to a soft landing.

MR. KUBASOV: Thank you very much.

MR. STAFFORD: Thank you, Mr. President. It certainly has been an honor to serve the country and work here.

THE PRESIDENT: We will see you when you get back.

MR. STAFFORD: Yes, sir.

END (AT 3:45 P.M. EDT)