

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
WILLIAM R. TOLBERT, JR.
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

THE SOUTH LAWN

10:50 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: President Tolbert, Mrs. Tolbert, ladies and gentlemen:

I am particularly pleased to welcome back to Washington a distinguished friend of the United States of America. President Tolbert, your State visit is the first by an African leader in our third century of American history. We are proud and honored to have the red, white and blue of Liberia fly side by side with our own colors.

Americans and Liberians share a very unique and special relationship. Both countries were founded by men and women who deeply believe in liberty and justice. The Liberian national motto, "The love of liberty brought us here," could apply just as well to the United States of America.

You have arrived here at a time when Americans are seeking to assist Africans to achieve peaceful solutions to extremely difficult problems. I have sent our Secretary of State to Africa in full knowledge of the complexity of the problems and of the limitations of our role. Any realistic and enduring settlement must be made in Africa. We can only offer our assistance in encouraging the parties to negotiate to prevent increased violence and bloodshed.

Mr. President, as a distinguished African statesman, you are fully aware of the danger and the challenge that faces all men and women of good will in the southern portion of your continent. We greatly appreciate and value your wise counsel, your moderation and your support. We assure you that the United States will remain a trusted friend worthy of your confidence and that of all Liberians and all the peoples of Africa.

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Americans have noted with admiration the determination with which Liberia is developing its potentialities. We will continue to help Liberia help herself.

As President of Liberia, you have contributed much to the material and spiritual evolution of your people, but you have also given yourself internationally as an ordained Baptist minister through your leadership of the Baptist World Alliance. As the first black elected president of the Baptist World Alliance, you have advanced the vision of President Tubman through your inspired work for the benefit of man and the glory of God.

We thank you and all the people of Liberia, not only for your visit, but for Liberia's many manifestations of friendship in this Bicentennial Year. I was especially gratified to know of your personal participation, Mr. President, in our Fourth of July celebration in Monrovia.

Mr. President, you are a welcome visitor to the nation's capital and to the White House. I look forward to our discussions. Through these exchanges, we can advance the cause of peaceful progress for Africa and for all humanity.

The American people join in welcoming you and strengthening during this visit the very close ties between our two peoples.

PRESIDENT TOLBERT: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, friends:

We are profoundly touched by your thrillingly warm remarks of welcome, Mr. President, extended to Mrs. Tolbert, members of my official party and to me at the commencement of our visit to your great nation on this most historic and significant occasion.

We are gratified that you have paid my country and Africa the signal honor of this unique invitation to share with you and all citizens of America the captivating joys of your historic Bicentennial celebrations. Impressed as we are by your exhilaratingly warm reception of us, we sincerely ask, in turn, that you accept of us, Mr. President, our heartfelt appreciation and gratitude.

As we enthusiastically rejoice with you in the spirit of '76, we salute you and all the great people of the United States of America and extend our hearty congratulations as you enter upon your third century of dynamic and inspiring nationhood. The microcosm of the whole world, America has illuminated the limitless potentials of the human family when it is free to think, free to decide and free to act.

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America is a viable land of spectacular and expanding opportunity. The model of resiliency and renewal, America is an historic land where challenges are pursued with courage and with skill. A mosaic of devotion and resolve, the American people are admired for their ingenious quests, for excellence in science and statecraft, in industry and enterprise. America is indeed a creative land of surging patriotism and surging proficiency.

With her towering stature and commanding influence in the comity of nations, she has defended and expanded democracy around the world, fostering integrity, spawning opportunities and endeavoring to sever the scourge of injustice and indignity from the noble family of mankind.

The Liberian nation and people are proud to have traditionally enjoyed with you, Mr. President, and the great American people, a unique and special friendship during the span of our 130 years of independence. We have drawn exceptional inspiration from your unrelenting and outstanding leadership in the world for genuine understanding and productive cooperation and we embrace the fervent hope that America's innovative initiatives will be clearly evident in man's continuing search for peace and in the struggle against poverty, exploitation, suppression, oppression, injustice and human indignity.

It is indeed our deepest wish, Mr. President, that the essence of the Spirit of '76 will enrich the living conditions of our one world so that all God's children may obtain a better quality of life in a free work of equality, a vibrant opportunity and of social justice.

We ask that you be so kind as to accept from the government and people of Liberia, and in our own name, Mr. President, our fondest wishes for unprecedented heights of happiness and achievement for the enterprising, most industrious and illustrious nation and people of the United States of America.

Thank you.

END

(AT 10:58 A.M. EDT)