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MAY 31, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT
MEMORIAL DAY SERVICES

ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY

11:30 A.M. EDT

Mr. Sutphin, Secretary of the Army, Senator Dole, distinguished Members of the Congress, members of the Diplomatic Corps, sponsoring veterans organizations, General Yerks, ladies and gentlemen:

There is no higher honor or more solemn privilege than to represent our nation in paying tribute to its honored dead. In this, our 200th year, this day and this hallowed grounds take on a very special meaning. As we mark this anniversary of our national independence, we must remember that the Bicentennial celebrates more than a successful political revolution which freed America from foreign rule.

The founding of our nation was more than a political event. It was an act of faith, a promise to Americans and to the entire world. The Declaration of Independence declared that people can govern themselves, that they can live in freedom with equal rights, that they can respect the rights of others.

In the two centuries that have passed since 1776, millions upon millions of Americans have worked and taken up arms when necessary to make that dream a reality. We can be extremely proud of what they have accomplished. Today, we are the world's oldest Republic. We are at peace. Our nation and our way of life endure. We are free.

All who come to Arlington this Memorial Day must reflect upon the sacrifices made by those continually brave Americans who lie in rest on these hillsides as beneath silent markers at Valley Forge, Gettysburg and Pearl Harbor.

Their courage won a revolution. Their bravery preserved our Republic. Their perseverance kept the peace and insured a heritage of freedom.

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It is through their sacrifice that we have a Bicentennial. It is through their sacrifice that we, the living, have inherited a sacred burden, a trust to honor the past by working for the future. Other nations have risen to great heights only to weaken in their resolve. We must not repeat their error.

A nation born of faith and carried forward by action requires from each of us a commitment to advance individual liberty and to maintain our guard against those who would threaten our freedom. Although we thank God that no Americans are dying in battle today, we must renew our resolve to use both our moral leadership and our material strength to keep the peace.

Over a century ago another President stood before America's fallen at Gettysburg, and spoke words that have rung through the decades of our history. They are particularly appropriate today.

"It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave their last full measure of devotion; that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that Government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

Thank you.

END (AT 11:35 A.M. EDT)