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Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT UPON ARRIVAL
FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
SAN JUAN, PUERTO RICO

In recent years the industrialized democracies have become increasingly concerned with questions of economic growth and stability. The linkages between our nations have multiplied and our economies have become more closely interrelated. Last November at Rambouillet we began a dialogue which recognized our mutual concerns and our inter-relationships. Today we come together to continue that dialogue. We are fully aware of how important it is for us to work together to shape policies to achieve stable economic growth and to respond to the new challenges and opportunities which face us all.

Since we last met we have witnessed significant economic improvements throughout the world. Certainly in the United States our progress has been better than many predicted. But some old problems remain and new ones confront us. The very speed of the recovery itself serves as a major test of our ability to ensure long-term stability in our economy. This is not a test, however, for the United States alone. It is the special challenge facing the peoples of all the industrialized democracies. I welcome the opportunity to meet again with the leaders of our major economic partners. I am confident that these discussions will help us to continue our current economic progress, and move us ever closer to our goal of economic growth and stability throughout the world.

This is my first visit as President to the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. It is a fitting moment to reflect on the rich and long history of cooperation and participation which this Island and its people share with the United States. That history has been built on a simple but fundamental precept--the right of the people of Puerto Rico and the United States freely to determine the nature of their ties with one another. Over the years we have chosen to have a close relationship, and we have built this relationship around a common citizenship, a common defense, a common currency, and a common market.

Today, we find that the nature of our relationship is again, as in the past, a subject of free discussion and debate. This in itself is the best testament to the strength of what we have built together, and it is the best promise that what we together choose to do in the future will be beneficial to the people of this Island.

There are those, however, who seek to distort the facts; to mislead others about our relationship with Puerto Rico. The record is clear and open. We are proud of the relationship that we have developed together and we invite the world to examine it. We commend to its critics the same freedom of choice through free and open election which is enjoyed by the people of Puerto Rico. Those who might be inclined to interfere in our freely determined relations should know that such an act will be considered as intervention in the domestic affairs of Puerto Rico and the United States; it will be an unfriendly act which will be resisted by appropriate means.

In the midst of this beautiful setting, we cannot forget that problems, both political and economic, remain. As we base our hopes on freedom of choice and expression to help resolve the political problems, so we look to cooperation and interdependence to overcome our economic problems. I am hopeful that the work of the Summit will give a new impetus to the growth of our worldwide economy and improved international cooperation, and thus will have a positive effect on both the United States and Puerto Rico.

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