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Series: Speech File Draft Files
Subseries: Chron File, 1989-1993

OA/ID Number: 13480
Folder ID Number: 13480-002

Folder Title:
Pickering Swearing-in, 3/20/89

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

March 20, 1989

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
AND U.S. AMBASSADOR
TO THE UNITED NATIONS
THOMAS R. PICKERING
DURING SWEARING-IN CEREMONY

The Roosevelt Room

10:00 A.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Well, please be seated, and we're all delighted to be here. We were reminiscing in the Oval Office with the Pickerings. And Barbara and I had visited them in four different posts: Jordan, Israel, Nigeria and El Salvador. And in all likelihood, we will be visiting them in a fifth post. (Laughter.)

But this is a proud day, I think for the country, certainly for Tom and Tom's family, and for the Foreign Service. Ambassador Pickering, as we all know, is a skilled diplomat, a veteran of high-priority tough assignments. He is one of only five FSOs that hold the rank of career ambassador. He's had extensive global experience, diplomatic experience that includes in a broad sense the Middle East, Central America, Africa, and now he's assuming a very important job.

I take the U.N. very seriously, and I'm pleased with the changes that have been taking place there. I salute, incidentally, his predecessor, my friend Dick Walters, who is with us today, for helping affect some of the changes, particularly on the financial side. I believe that the Secretary General, an old friend of ours, Javier Perez de Cuellar, is doing a good job, and he deserves our support.

The U.N.'s Nobel Peace Prize for peacekeeping is a sign of new respect for the organization. And the U.N. is on the right track for reform. It is now certainly a more effective organization, and I expect under Tom's prodding, that will continue -- that reform momentum. Signs of greater political seriousness must continue. A case in point has been the approach to Cuba and human rights. As a result of the recent U.N. Commission on Human Rights meeting in Geneva, Cuba's human rights record will be in the spotlight. I'd like to have seen a continuation of that mission, but nevertheless, it has been spotlighted there. And I'm counting on Tom Pickering to make sure that the question of human rights in Cuba maintains an appropriately high profile, and stays high on the United Nations agenda.

The U.N. can be a force for peace, a forum for resolving conflict. And as proof of this, consider its instrumental role in the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, in the Iran-Iraq war -- a

further ado, Jim, if you would do the honors, I will grab my toe mark here. (Laughter.) Here we are. Here's your toe mark. (Laughter.)

(The oath is administered.)

AMBASSADOR PICKERING: President and Mrs. Bush, Vice President Quayle, Secretary Baker, family and friends. Thank you very much, Mr. President, for your very kind words and your strong and ringing endorsement, and thank you both for being here with me this morning at this very important event in my life and in my hope to serve our country as well as possible.

Your faith and confidence in me and through me and the American Foreign Service is a special mark of honor for me and for all of us, many of whom are here with me today, who serve in the American Foreign Service.

I think I share with Jim Lilley, who will soon be the next Ambassador in Beijing, a unique and historical distinction. We will be the first ambassadors in American history to serve a President who knows just everything more about our jobs than we do. (Laughter.) That's a heavy load. But I will be on my toes in New York to try to do the best I possibly can in this endeavor. And I think it's symbolic that just a few minutes ago, Mr. President, a number of members of the Cabinet staff took all the dead wood out of this office. (Laughter.)

Because this administration has already shown its interest, there is a new excitement in New York at the United Nations. As an institution under the able leadership of the Secretary General, who was a companion and colleague of yours, it has made real progress over the last few years in peacemaking and in peacekeeping; in Afghanistan, in the Iran-Iraq war, and now in the Angola-Namibia settlement. It has supported free elections everywhere and the benefits of the market economies. It has helped with programs in the area of narcotics, in international terrorism, in human rights, and in national development. And it has begun building a program of far-reaching reforms.

This has been a result not only of our own policies, but of change; of changing views in the Soviet Union and elsewhere, and particularly the work of a number of my distinguished predecessors. And I want to mention particularly Dick Walters, who is here with us this morning. He has been a terrific predecessor, a great man to break in a new ambassador, and along with the very able staff of the mission in New York and the people who work on this subject at the State Department, has been an enormous help. Mr. Secretary, John Bolton, I look forward to working very closely with you in the days ahead on our policy at the United Nations.

It is a time for us to look ahead, cautiously, but I think optimistically, in New York. U.N. reform can and should continue. Peacemaking in areas as remote, but as important, as Cambodia and the Western Sahara, and even in Cyprus, now show some sign of progress. Peacekeeping tasks are likely to continue to grow. Help in Central America will certainly be important in verifying a

attend a swearing-in. (Laughter.)

I'm delighted as well to see so many friends here. But I do want to mention one special friend and supporter, without whom this day would not be possible. Alice has been part of a foreign service team with me for many years. She has done a fantastic amount of work around the world, much of it unsung. Indeed, I feel often I get the recognition and she gets the tough jobs. However that may be, I hope you will all consider with me that this is her day today as much as it is anyone else's. And I want to thank her from this platform for all that she has done, because she represents, as many others in the foreign service represent, the best in the way of loyalty and devotion to the ideals of the United States in unstinting service to our country. She very much took the oath with me as she has six times before. And I'm delighted that she is here, and I hope that she will share in the recognition that's being accorded to me here today.

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TALKING POINTS: SWEARING-IN OF AMBASSADOR
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- This is a proud day: for Tom Pickering, for Tom's family, for the foreign service.
- Ambassador Pickering is a skilled diplomat, a veteran of high priority assignments.
- Tom is one of only 5 FSOs holding rank of Career Ambassador.
- Ambassador Pickering's extensive global experience will serve him well -- diplomatic experience that includes the Middle East, Central America, and Africa (as Ambassador to Nigeria).
- The task Tom is now assuming is important indeed.

-2-

- I take the UN very seriously. I am pleased with changes that have taken place there since my time as Ambassador.
- UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar is doing outstanding work.
- The UN's Nobel Peace Prize for peace-keeping is a sign of the organization's importance and capabilities.
- The UN is on the right track to reform -- it is now a more effective organization.
- That reform momentum, and signs of greater political seriousness, must continue.

- A case in point: Cuba, and the human rights issue there.
- As a result of the recent UN Commission on Human Rights' meeting in Geneva, Cuba's human rights record will be in the spotlight.
- I count on Ambassador Pickering to make sure the question of human rights in Cuba maintains a high profile -- and stays high on the UN's agenda.
- The UN can be a force for peace, a forum for resolving conflict.
- As proof of this: consider its instrumental role in the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the Iran-Iraq war.

- The UN is an important place in the international arena.
- And my point man there will be Tom Pickering -- an able, and articulate advocate for this Administration's foreign policy.
- Tom, my congratulations and best wishes. (Please proceed with the swearing-in.)

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(McGroarty/Simon)
March 17, 1989
2:00 pm

3/17

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