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TALKING POINTS

CBS "Sixty Minutes" INTERVIEW
Sunday, August 18, 1996

Q: What is your reaction to news reports that Jim McDougal is cooperating with the Independent Counsel?

A: I really don't know what there is to those reports. All I can say is that Hillary and I have cooperated fully with the Independent Counsel's inquiry and I cooperated with Jim McDougal's request that I provide testimony for his trial. All I can do now is to go about the business Americans sent me here to Washington to do.

BACKGROUND: Avoid characterizations of the investigation or describing expectations about legitimate outcomes.

Q: Why did you turn documents over to Congressman Clinger's Committee on Thursday?

A: On Thursday, the White House made public documents that House Republicans have had access to since June 27. We made these documents public because we want people to make up their own minds about whether my partisan opponents are misusing the congressional hearing process to inflict political damage.

Q: What do you make of this FBI files issue?

A: Getting these FBI reports in late 1993 and early 1994 was inexcusable. No one was more upset about this than I was. We have taken action to make sure that this will never, ever happen again - not in this administration and not in any future administrations.

I would note that at this time -- after several days of intense congressional hearings and a great deal of investigative work by the media -- there is no indication whatsoever that anyone in the White House did anything with information from these files.

Q: Will Whitewater damage your re-election prospects?

A: No. I have faith that the American people are fair-minded. They understand that Whitewater has now been examined for four years by an unprecedented number of reporters, two Independent Counsels, Congress and the Resolution Trust Corporation. We cooperated fully with every legitimate inquiry. Throughout all of this, my political opponents have failed to show that the First Lady or I did anything wrong or unethical.

We firmly believe the American people are concerned far more with the real issues that affect their lives on a daily basis -- balancing the budget, reforming welfare, protecting our children, investing in education and the environment and preserving medicare. These are the issues people care about now -- and will care about come election time.

Q: Isn't Whitewater really a question of character and trust?

A: I make tough decisions EVERY DAY. During the course of this administration, I have made some of the toughest and most difficult choices any President has had to make. I took on the Washington lobbyists and pushed through the largest deficit reduction package in history. My administration confronted the NRA in our fight to pass the Brady Bill and the assault weapons ban. I have taken on the powerful tobacco industry so as to reduce smoking by teenagers. I fought the Gingrich-Dole Congress to protect American families against the Republican attempt to gut medicare funding for our elderly and education programs for our children. I have taken on the special interests and the Gingrich-Dole Congress and won because it best serves all Americans. To me, that is what character and trust are all about.