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001. statement	re: Draft President William Jefferson Clinton remarks at the presentation of the Medal of Freedom to President James Earl Carter and Rosalynn Carter (18 pages)	08/08/1999	P5
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COLLECTION:

Clinton Presidential Records
National Security Council
Speechwriting (Paul Orzulak)
OA/Box Number: 4023

FOLDER TITLE:

[Medal of Freedom] [Folder 3]

2008-0702-F

jm616

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
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P6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

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PRM. Personal record misfile defined in accordance with 44 U.S.C. 2201(3).

RR. Document will be reviewed upon request.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

b(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
b(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
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b(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information concerning wells [(b)(9) of the FOIA]

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Atlanta, Georgia)

For Immediate Release

August 9, 1999

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT,
PRESIDENT CARTER AND MRS. CARTER
AT THE MEDAL OF FREEDOM PRESENTATION

The Carter Center
Atlanta, Georgia

7:05 P.M. EDT

PRESIDENT CLINTON: President and Mrs. Carter, members of the Carter family, including grandchild number 10, Hugo, who's right outside -- (laughter) -- members of the Cabinet who are here, friends of the Carters, Mr. Mayor. Let me say to all of you what a great pleasure it is for me to be here today. I flew down on Air Force One today with a number of former Carter administration members who many of them are in our administration, many others are mutual friends, and we relived old stories.

I remember in 1974, Governor Jimmy Carter had a role in the Democratic Party and he was trying to help us all win elections. And I was running for Congress and he sent Jody Powell to Northwest Arkansas to help me. I should have known something was up. (Laughter.) Thank goodness he failed and I lost that election. (Laughter.)

In 1975, Jimmy Carter came to Arkansas to give a speech, met with me and my wife and others and we signed on. In 1976, my home state was the only state besides Georgia where President Carter got more than 65 percent of the vote. So it's a great personal honor for me to be here today.

Over the past several years, the President and Mrs. Carter have received many awards, all of them well-deserved. Rosalynn has received more than a dozen just from children's organizations alone. President Carter has been knighted in Mali, made an honorary tribal chief in Nigeria and Ghana. There are at least three families in Africa he's met who have named their newborn child Jimmy Carter. (Laughter.)

Now these are hard acts to follow. (Laughter.) But today, it is my privilege, on behalf of a grateful nation, to confer America's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, on Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter.

Twenty-two years ago, when presenting this same award posthumously to Dr. Martin Luther King, President Carter said, "there are many Americans who do great things, who make us proud of them and their achievements, and who inspire us to do better ourselves. But there are some among those noble achievers who are exemplary in every way, who reach a higher plateau of achievement."

It is in that spirit that we look back on two extraordinary lives

today. In the past, this award has been presented to people who have helped America promote freedom -- by fighting for human rights, or righting social wrongs, or empowering others to achieve, or extending peace around the world. But rarely do we honor two people who have devoted themselves so effectively to advancing freedom in all those ways. Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter have done more good things for more people in more places than any other couple on the face of the earth. (Applause.)

To be sure, there have been other Presidents who have continued to contribute to the public good once they left office: Thomas Jefferson founded the University of Virginia; John Quincy Adams returned to Congress for eight terms and fought slavery; William Howard Taft became Chief Justice.

But the work President Carter has done through this extraordinary Carter Center to improve our nation and our world is truly unparalleled in our nation's history. We've all gotten used to seeing pictures of President Carter building homes for people through Habitat for Humanity. But the full story lies in pictures we don't see, of the 115 countries he's visited since leaving office, to end hunger and disease and to spread the cause of peace; by the more than 20 elections he's helped to monitor, where democracy is taking root, thanks in part to his efforts; of the millions in Africa who are living better lives thanks to his work to eradicate diseases like Guinea worm and river blindness; of the dozens of political prisoners who have been released, thanks in part to letters he has written away from the public spotlight.

I was proud to have his support when we worked together to bring democracy back to Haiti and to preserve stability on the Korean Peninsula. I am grateful for the many detailed, incisive reports he has sent to me from his trip to troubled nations all across the globe, always urging understanding of their problems and their points of view, always outlining practical steps to progress.

To call Jimmy Carter the greatest former President in history, as many have, however, does not do justice either to him or to his work. For, in a real sense, this Carter Center is not a new beginning, but a continuation of the Carter presidency.

The work President Carter did in those four years not only broke important new ground, it is still playing a large role in shaping the world we live in today. One of the proudest moments of my life was the day in 1993 when Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat shook hands on the South Lawn of the White House. That day was made possible by the courage of the people of the Middle East and their leaders, but also by another handshake 20 years before, and the persistence of President Carter as he brokered the Camp David Accords. I know it is a great source of pride for him that, 21 years later, not a word of that agreement has been violated. (Applause.)

If you talk to any elected leader in Latin America today, they will tell you that the stand President Carter took for democracy and human rights put America on the right side of history in our hemisphere. He was the first President to put America's commitment to human rights squarely at the heart of our foreign policy. Today, more than half the world's people live in freedom, not least because he had the faith to lend America support, to brave dissidents like Sakharov, Havel and Mandela. And there were thousands of less well-known political prisoners languishing in jails in the 1970s who were sustained by a smuggled news clipping of President Carter championing their cause. His role in saving the life of the President of South Korea, President Kim, is well known.

His resolve on SALT II, even though it was never ratified, helped to constrain the arms race for a full decade and laid the groundwork for the dramatic reductions in nuclear weaponry we see today. By normalizing relations with China, he began a dialogue which holds the promise of avoiding a new era of conflict and containment and, instead, building a future of cooperation with the world's most populous nation.

Here at home, his work on deregulation helped free up competitive forces that continue to strengthen our economy today. His work on conservation, particularly the Alaska Lands Act, accelerated a process that has created the cleanest air and water in a generation. His advocacy of energy conservation and clean energy will loom even larger in the years ahead as our nation and our world finally come to grips with the challenge of climate change. And by hiring and appointing more women and more minorities than any other administration to that point, he set a shining example of the one America we all long to live in. (Applause.)

During the Carter years, Rosalynn Carter also brought vision, compassion, tireless energy and commitment to the causes she advanced. Just as Eleanor Roosevelt will be remembered for her work on human rights, Rosalynn Carter will always be remembered as a pioneer on mental health and a champion of our children.

For more than 30 years she has made it her mission to erase the stigma surrounding mental health. As First Lady of Georgia, she used to travel dusty back roads to meet with people and volunteered her time at a state hospital. She took what she learned to the White House, where she chaired the President's Commission on Mental Health with style and grace. Afterwards, she initiated the Rosalynn Carter Symposium on Mental Health Policy and has worked to promote action on mental health worldwide.

We have made some progress in the last few years in extending health coverage and health insurance policies to mental health conditions, thanks in large measure to Tipper Gore's efforts; and in broadening public understanding and support for further action. It would not have happened if Rosalynn Carter hadn't done what she did first. (Applause.) Thanks to her work, I believe we will see the day not too long away when mental illness is treated just like any other illness, and covered just like any other illnesses.

We also owe her our gratitude for her efforts to ensure that all our children are immunized. Two decades ago, she helped America see that while many vaccines were being discovered, too few children were being vaccinated. She traveled across our country and became so recognized as a leader on immunization that people used to joke that every time she showed up, the kids would start to cry because they knew somebody was going to get a shot. (Laughter.)

Her work inspired President Carter to launch a nationwide campaign to immunize all children by the time they enter school -- an effort we have built on. I can tell you that in the last two years, we can say for the first time in history, 90 percent of America's children have been immunized against serious childhood diseases. That would not have happened if Rosalynn Carter hadn't started this crusade more than two decades ago. (Applause.) We have seen this kind of commitment in all of her endeavors, from her work to organize relief for Cambodian refugees to her constant efforts to ensure that women get equal pay for equal work.

The extraordinary partnership between these two remarkable

Americans has remained strong for more than 50 years now. To see it merely as a political journey tells only part of the story. At its heart, those of us who admire them see their journey as one of love and faith. In many ways, this Center has been their ministry.

In his book, "Living Faith," President Carter recalls a sermon that says, when we die, the marker on our grave has two dates: the day we're born and the day we die. And a little dash in between, representing our whole life on Earth, the little dash. To God, the tiny dash is everything.

What a dash they have already made. (Applause.)

By doing justice, by loving mercy, by walking humbly with their God, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter are still living their faith, still making the most of the dash in between the numbers.

It will be hard for any future historian to chronicle all the good work they have done. It will be quite impossible for anyone to chronicle all the good works they have inspired in the hearts and lives of others throughout the world. Today, we do all we can; a grateful nation says thank you.

Colonel, read the citation.

(The citation is read.) (Applause.)

PRESIDENT CARTER: Mr. President, I'm almost speechless with emotion for what you had to say and the generous way you said it. It's a real honor to have you here again, and to welcome you to the Carter Center, and to receive this award, really, on behalf of all the wonderful people who have worked with us for the last 22 years in the White House and more recently at the Carter Center.

Many of them are assembled here this afternoon for this ceremony, and I'd like to ask all of those with your spouses who have served with us to please rise and let President Clinton see who you are. (Applause.)

As President Clinton mentioned, Rosalynn and I have visited, now, more than 115 nations in the world. We've had a chance to learn about the people that we've visited. And we've seen in their eyes quite often despair, and hopelessness and fear, and a lack of self-respect -- quite often even fearful of their own governments.

We have learned in that time the intimate relationship that should exist between governments throughout the world and civilian organizations, non-governmental organizations like the Carter Center -- and, Mr. President, like the one that in a few months you'll be establishing for yourself and your wife. It's very important for us to realize that the intimate relationship between officials who serve people and the people's own organizations should be strong, and constant.

This afternoon, not only do we recognize the significance of this wonderful award, but it's especially meaningful to me to receive it from a leader who has pursued many of the same goals that were mentioned in the generous citation. Mr. President, you have demonstrated global leadership, often under the most difficult of circumstances, in your commitment to protect human rights, to bring peace to people who live in Bosnia and Kosovo, and in the Middle East -- and countries in Africa, which you and your wife have visited. And also to take the leadership among nations and working to alleviate human suffering.

You still have some months to go before you join our small fraternity laughter of former Presidents. (Laughter.) I might point out that all but one of us were involuntarily retired, Mr. President. (Laughter.) But I can assure you that it will be a different life and one that you are certain to relish. Each President of the United States is different from all the others, just as each citizen whom we have had the honor to serve is different from all of his or her neighbors. You'll make your own choices about what to do in your post-presidential years.

In order to utilize the literally indescribable influence and opportunities that you'll carry with you, having served as the leader of the greatest nation on earth, one of the easiest privileges of the future to visualize, and one of the fondest dreams is the right to privacy. In fact, early tomorrow morning, Rosalynn and I will be leaving Atlanta and flying with our fly rods out to meet some friends and to enjoy being with them in Colorado and Montana for a week or so. I can almost certainly say that we will not see a single news reporter in that entire time. (Laughter.)

Now, just imagine, Mr. President, you'll be able to play golf without any television, telephoto lenses focused on your stroke. Isn't that great? (Laughter.) But I think I have to warn you that there are some down sides to being out of office, as well. I understand that golfing partners don't give as many mulligans to ex-presidents as they do to presidents. (Laughter.)

Mr. President, Rosalynn and I hope that you and Hillary will find as much satisfaction and joy after you leave office as Rosalynn and I have found for ourselves. We left Washington in something of despair and embarrassment and disappointment and frustration. We didn't know what in the world we were going to do.

I was about the same age that you will be when you leave the White House. I found out from some of our friends at CDC that I still had 25 years of life expectancy left -- (laughter) -- what was I going to do with it? (Laughter.) And out of that has come the Carter Center, which has given us, in effect, a new life -- a life of pleasure and challenge and adventure, unpredictability about the future, intimate relationships with those who needed us, that I could never have had along with the official duties of the presidency.

We have formed intimate relationships with people in small villages in Africa and those hungry for freedom and democracy in Indonesia and in Haiti, as you mentioned, and in Paraguay and other countries. We've tried to bring them the blessings of America in a completely unofficial way, but in a personal way that will only come to you after you do leave your great office.

We look forward to working with both of you, Rosalynn and I do, after you establish your own foundation or your own center, or your own institution in the years to come, and become a fellow member of our small fraternity.

I thank you again for this honor. And I want to repeat, another time, how overwhelmed I've been with the words that you spoke -- as are many of the things that you've done in office, they are above and beyond the call of duty.

I accept this award on behalf of all of those assembled here, and those that couldn't come, who have worked side-by-side with us as

partners, both in Washington and here in the Carter Center.

It's now my pleasure to introduce someone whom I love and respect and cherish, and honor: my wife, Rosalynn. (Applause.)

MRS. CARTER: Thank you very much. Thank you. (Applause.) Thank you, Mr. President, also for your kind remarks, and for this award. We are honored by the recognition of our work. And I say "work," but it really hasn't been work at all. Well, maybe a little work -- (laughter) -- when we were in the White House, and when Jimmy was Governor.

But we've always done the things that we wanted to do and the things that we enjoyed doing. And one of the things that you'll find different, Mr. President, when you're out of office, is that you'll have options. You'll be able to pick and choose the things that you want to work on; you won't have to take care of everything at one time.

And whatever you undertake can be gratifying, we can assure you of that. We've had wonderful experiences, whether working in the field of mental health, or with care-givers, or immunization programs, or visiting some of our Carter Center programs. It's gratifying, for instance, to go into a village in Africa where half of the population at least, and sometimes more, are lying on mats on the ground suffering from Guinea worm disease and go back maybe a year, maybe 15 months later, and nobody have a Guinea worm.

And once we went into a village that still had Guinea worm, and there was a ceremony and we were sitting under a shelter made from sticks and palm fronds with a great crowd in front of us. And I looked out, and there was a little girl holding up a sign that said, "Better go away Guinea worm, Jimmy Carter's coming." (Laughter.) Or visiting one of our agricultural programs and have the farmer come running out with tears down his cheeks saying, "My sons have come home from the city because now we can raise enough food to feed all our family right here." That's not work, Mr. President.

Well, Jimmy and I have been -- have had great opportunities. We've been very privileged. The American people have given us unlimited chances, unlimited opportunities, and we have wonderful friends who support our programs here at the Carter Center and make it possible for us to do things that we never would ever have been able to do. We thank all of them.

We're grateful to all of them. And we thank you, Mr. President, again, for this honor. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT CARTER: That's the end of a beautiful program. Thank you all very much. We're going to leave now, and I want to express particularly my thanks to all of those who came from Washington and other places to be with us this afternoon at what, for me, is one of the most beautiful events of my life.

Thank you very much to you and to President Clinton. (Applause.)

END 7:30 P.M. EDT

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