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they have endowed our Nation with unparalleled energy and vision.

We owe a debt of gratitude to these Americans, both for the gift of their talents and for helping us build bridges of understanding to their ancestral lands in the Pacific Community—bridges that help our economies to grow and that widen the path to peace.

Today, our Nation stands at the dawn of a new era of hope and opportunity. We depend as never before on the active involvement of every one of our people to meet the challenges of our changing world. With the strength of our diversity and a continued commitment to the ideal of freedom, all Americans will share in the blessings of the bright future that awaits us.

To honor the achievements of Asian/Pacific Americans and to recognize their many contributions to our Nation, the Congress, by Public Law 102–450, has designated the month of May as ''Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month.''

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim May 1995, as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month. I call upon the people of the United States to observe this occasion with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this third day of May, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-five, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and nineteenth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on May 4, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on May 5.

Interview With Laurie Montgomery of the Detroit Free Press and Angie Cannon of Knight Ridder

May 4, 1995

The President. Hello.

Ms. Cannon. Good morning, Mr. President.

The President. Good morning. How are you?

Ms. Cannon. Good, how are you doing?

The President. Great.

Ms. Montgomery. Good morning, Mr. President. My name is Laurie Montgomery. I'm a reporter with the Detroit Free Press. And I'm going to be asking you most of the questions this morning. I have some that I think are real important to Michigan right now. Could I go ahead?

The President. Sure, have at it.

Ms. Montgomery. All right. I've got three related to the Oklahoma City tragedy, and one about trade talks with Japan. And then we've got a few other ones if there's time.

The President. Okay.

Militia Groups

Ms. Montgomery. So, first, in the wake of the bombing, you've proposed to expand the FBI's power to investigate terrorist, groups by using standards that determine when a group or individual becomes an appropriate target for surveillance. Tomorrow you're heading to Michigan, home of the Michigan Militia. I was wondering how dangerous you consider the militia movement. And from what you know now, does it currently present an appropriate target for FBI surveillance?

The President. Well, first of all, I think it's important not to generalize. I think it's important not to generalize. We need to look at the facts of each one. But let me tell you, when I was the Governor of my State, as you know, for 12 years before I became President, and in the early eighties, we had the first wave of these groups coming to Arkansas. And I will give you three examples of what happened, where I judged each on the facts.

First, we had the tax resistor, Gordon Calder, who killed two people in North Dakota and wounded three others and took the position that he had a right to live in this country and not pay taxes. And he killed the sheriff, who was a very good friend of mine in Arkansas when they tried to arrest him. He presented a threat to the United States. And he—of course, he was subsequently killed there in a shoot-out.

Secondly—let me just lay the predicate here—secondly, we had a man that expressed these same views but took the law into his own hands, named Snell, who killed a State trooper who was black and killed a pawnshop owner that he thought was Jewish. He was executed in Arkansas a few days ago. But he was arrested and convicted and sentenced to death when I was Governor. He presented a threat by his conduct. He took his words into action.

Then we had a group of about 200 people that occupied an armed compound in North Arkansas, and they had two people who were wanted for murder. There were murder warrants out on them. And they refused to give them up, but we basically had a coordinated effort, and we in effect declared—we had an embargo, or we cordoned off their area, a blockade, and eventually the women and children came out, and eventually the men gave up. Those that were subject to indictment were treated appropriately; the others went right on with their lives. So they handled it in the appropriate way.

So this country allows people broader personal freedoms than almost any democracy in the world, particularly with regard to the right to keep and bear arms.

Ms. Montgomery. And I guess my question is, absent the sort of action that you described, murdering a sheriff——

The President. It depends on—but here's the deal. The FBI needs to be in a position without abusing people's freedoms to try to prevent things like Oklahoma City from happening.

Ms. Montgomery. And should they do that by beginning surveillances of some of the religious groups?

The President. We have to be able to gather intelligence from people if we have reason to believe that they are threatening to use violence. That's the issue. The question is, is there reason to believe that these people are likely, that any groups are likely to use violence. And I think what our bill does is to give the FBI the means in a high-tech world with a lot of high-tech criminals to use high technology within appropriate safeguards to try to prevent the Oklahoma Cities, to try to prevent these things from happening in the first place.

Ms. Montgomery. And I guess what I'm asking is, from what you know now, would some of these militias currently present an appropriate target for the use of that sort of surveillance?

The President. From what I know now, the FBI would have to consider that based on the rhetoric and the conduct and make a judgment based on the facts of each group. I don't want to jump the gun here. I think it's important—what I'm asking for is to give us the tools we need to combat terrorism.

I know—for example, if you look at Israel, for all the terrible incidents they have endured, well over half of the planned terrorist incidents in Israel never occur because they have the capacity to defang them. We have endured this awful bombing in Oklahoma City and the World Trade Center bombing, which came from a group outside this country that infiltrated here. We also—our Federal authorities have been successful in heading off at least two other incidents of terrorism that we know about that they were able to stop from occurring.

We just believe—I cannot tell you how strongly I believe that this is the major threat to the security of Americans looking toward the 21st century, that the fundamental problem—it's not just in America. It's the same thing with that group of religious fanatics where the guy broke the vial of saran gas in the Japanese subway. It's exactly the same thing. The things which will make life exciting for all of our young college graduates—high technology society, free flow of people, goods, technology, and information, a highly open world society—make people very, very vulnerable to the forces of organized evil.

Ms. Montgomery. I guess I'm asking, you know, just in case there are any Michigan Militia members in the audience in Spartan Stadium tomorrow, you know, do you think that they are——

The President. Well, that's not my—I'm not going to make that judgment. I'm not the person to make that judgment. What I believe is the FBI, if they have reason to be concerned about it, should have the ability to look into any group where they think there is a likelihood that they might break the law in a violent way against citizens of the United States. That's what I believe.

Ms. Montgomery. You've been pretty tough specifically on some of these militia groups. What do you think motivates them?

The President. Well, I think a lot of them have had experiences in their life which profoundly alienate them from the American Government. And I would remind you that suspicion of Government and the desire to limit Government power is at the core of what created the United States in the first place. The whole Constitution is written to limit the power of Government. The Bill of Rights limits the power of the Federal Government to move against individuals. The separation of powers limits the power of any branch of Government. They check each other, the executive, legislation, and judicial. The division of authority between the Federal and the State and local governments limits the power of government in that way.

Our whole system was set up basically to try to guard against the abuses of Government power which the original Americans have lived under, under monarchies. And we know that there—that we have—from time to time, Governments make mistakes. And our Government, not only at the Federal level, but State government and local government, does occasionally abuse its authority. We know that. People are people everywhere. And people in Government authority make mistakes. Every one of us, including the President, can cite an example where he or she believes the Government oversteps its bounds, from something as innocent as being rude to a citizen in a Social Security line, or who's trying to get information about taxes, or trying to deal with an EPA regulation, to something as terrible as an unjustified arrest or an unjustified prosecution. Everybody can cite an example. There are no perfect people in the world.

But we have a Constitution and a system that gives people the right of redress. And what I think about those folks is, I don't know what at all their life experiences have been; I know that in our country they have more freedom to speak, to organize, and to bear arms, and especially to bear arms, than they would have in virtually any other democracy on the face of the Earth.

So I would say to them, that you have these freedoms. And if you don't like the way things are going, you can participate in elections. You can call in on talk shows. You can be part of forums. You can file lawsuits. You can do all kinds of things that are perfectly legal. You also have the right in our country to go meet on the weekend and talk about your feelings and express your feelings and do target practice and all these other things. But you do not have the right to break the law. And you certainly do not have the right to commit violence. There is a line over which people shouldn't step, and we have to draw the line clear and bright.

Ms. Montgomery. Do you have the right to say you're willing to use violence if you feel threatened by your Government?

The President. What I think is you have a right—there's all kinds of free speech rights. All they have to do is—you know, the Supreme Court has outlined the parameters of free speech. And the line, basically, in threatening other people is like the guy that cries fire in the crowded theater. That's the classic example. So what I think is that the closer you come to advocating violence, the more, at least, our law enforcement officials have to have the ability to at least look into whether they believe an incident is about to occur and whether they can head it off. I think the American people are entitled to that amount of protection.

Ms. Montgomery. Your discussion of the Constitution sort of goes to the heart of what these really extreme versions of these militia groups would say is what they're afraid of, that the Federal Government is not adhering to the Constitution. And that's the paranoid extreme. What I want to ask you about is that you can make the argument that that is a very extreme version of some fairly popular views.

You know, we've seen since the bombing that there are thousands of ordinary people who are just stunningly distrustful of their Government, who don't pay taxes and reject driver's licenses. Even when Malcolm X's daughter was charged, a lot of people said, "Oh, that's the FBI just coming after us, making things up." Do you think Americans are more suspicious of their Government than they should be? Why, and what do you think, if anything, you can do about it?

The President. Well, first of all let me say again, our country was founded on suspicion of government. But our country was founded on the belief that you could have a decent Government, and that societies have to have Government to do certain limited functions that will not be done in other ways. And over 200 years, we have defined and redefined over and over again what those powers were.

In times of great national duress, the Government has taken powers to itself that we would never tolerate in ordinary times. Look at what Abraham Lincoln did, for example, during the Civil War just to try to hold the country together. So, that has ebbed and flowed. We all, all of us as Americans, part of your birthright as an American is to have a healthy suspicion of the Government.

Ms. Montgomery. So you don't think it's particularly strong right now or——

The President. No, no, I do. I think it is stronger now. We're going through a period now when it is much stronger among certain groups than it has historically been. Sometimes it's because of their personal experience; sometimes it's because the anti-government voices are louder and better organized. But the point—and my own view is that the suspicion of the Government prevents people from making good—if it's blanket and if it's extreme, it keeps you from making good judgments about whether particular actions are right or wrong and keeps us from seeing what our challenges are and which challenges we have to meet through Government and which challenges we have to meet as private citizens.

But that is not the important thing. My view of that is irrelevant. The First Amendment gives people the right to say what they want to say, to believe what they want to believe, and to organize. But there is a bright, clear line against violation of the law and taking force and violence into your own hands. That is the bright, clear line.

Ms. Montgomery. Sure. I was talking on more of a philosophical level, actually, in the sense that, you know——

The President. What I think we ought to do about that is, yes, I think that the sort of generic anti-government feelings are keeping people from evaluating whether specific—whether it's my administration or the Congress or a particular bill pending, if you have a generally negative view of what is a very great country that is doing very well today compared to what other countries are doing, but which has some serious challenges which have to be met, some of which require Government response and some of which don't, it's hard to think about those things with a clear head if you're negative almost to the point of being paranoid, if you don't believe anything good can ever happen.

You know, if it's like—but that is not what I am concerned with now. I mean, I worry about that, and I think what I'd like to see is a sort of a discussion about that. One of the things I think in the wake of the American people's wonderful concern for the victims in Oklahoma, and they're seeing these Federal employees there and their children who were killed as real citizens, as people, as the people with whom they go to church and go to the ball park and eat lunch at the civic club once a week with, and do all those things—I think it would be a good thing. And this is something that could occur basically on the radio shows all over the country, where people are invited to call in.

We ought to ask ourselves, you know, to think of something—what do they do that is right; what do they do that is good; what matters that is a positive force; what do we think ought to be changed? In other words, we ought to have a balanced debate here, and it ought to be a grassroots debate. And my sense is that there's a lot of energy out there in our people for this kind of conversation, and we need to give it outlets.

Ms. Montgomery. Is there anything more you can do to encourage that, to help people feel more comfortable?

The President. Well, I intend to do—I'm going to continue to try to talk about these things and talk about it more and encourage others to do that as well.

Freedom of Speech

Ms. Cannon. So, in other words, Mr. President, what you're suggesting is, instead of some of the talk radio shows being purveyors of paranoia or just constant sneering, just sort of——

The President. Now, those are your words, not mine.

Ms. Cannon. Okay. [*Laughter*]

The President. —[*inaudible*]—always try to get into a discussion that I don't want to have instead of the one I do want to have.

Ms. Cannon. No, but I mean to try to turn the content of those shows over into something a little bit more constructive.

The President. Well, let me say this. This is a general observation. I think, insofar as talk radio is giving our country a sort of a set of town hall meetings that are constant and giving even people who are too shy ever to have their pictures on television the opportunity to call in and express their views and engage in a conversation, I think that's a very positive thing in the country. And I don't think it matters whether the talk radio shows or the talk shows are themselves conservative or liberal or what else, wherever they exist.

What I'm suggesting, though, is that we ought to use these forums now to try to reopen this conversation to really talk this things through. Now, I think some speech is wrong. I cannot defend some of the things that Gordon Liddy has said. I cannot defend some of the things some of these more extreme talk show hosts have said, even more extreme than that in these little short-wave programs that plainly are encouraging violence. I think that people should just speak out against that.

But what I would like to see is more of the people who consider themselves moderate to liberal calling the conservative talk shows and people who consider themselves conservatives calling the liberal talk shows. And I think the American people—we forget that we are strongest when we are united and that 90 percent of the times, our differences are nowhere near as important as the things which bring us together. And we forget that we have challenges today that are profound and that provoke a lot of anxiety in our country. You know, more than half our people are working harder for lower wages than they were making 15 years ago. I understand that. I'm doing my best to do something about it.

But instead of having this sort of undifferentiated anxiety and lashing out, what we need to be talking about is, every generation of Americans have had their own set of challenges and problems. We are no different from any other. There is no reason to believe, if you go back through all of human history, that there will ever be a time without problems. And this is the set of problems we face today. We have a lot of problems. But we also have vast opportunities. And if you look at where our country is, compared with so many others in the world, most of us would not trade places with people in any other country in the world. I know I wouldn't, and I wouldn't want my child to be growing up in any other country besides America now, and I think most people feel that way.

So, I'm hoping that we can draw the lines of things that we think are unacceptable that are just purely fostering hatred, division and encouraging violence and still have a conversation with differences of opinion. I think—and I also would tell you that my job as President is not to try to silence people with whom I disagree, no matter how bitterly I disagree. My job is to try to see that the Constitution is protected, and that the laws are upheld, that the American people are safe and secure to lead whatever lives they want to lead, to do whatever they want to do, and to express whatever political views they have.

Director of Media Affairs Lorrie McHugh. Angie, Laurie, we have to wrap this up.

Trade With Japan

Ms. Montgomery. Okay, one last question. Speaking of trading places, a question about the trade talks this week with Japan: There have been some reports of disagreement within your administration about taking firm action against Japan. Are you personally committed to proposing formal sanctions if the Japanese do not make sufficient concessions on autos, and by what date?

The President. First of all, I am committed to taking a strong line here. I have worked for over 2 years on this. I have done everything I could to open American markets, to expand trade. I supported NAFTA, I supported GATT. I have tried to be very strongly supportive of the American automobile industry and their trade interests.

And this administration has been a good friend of the auto industry in many, many ways as you—and we have worked hard, and we are proud of the success that they're now enjoying.

But the one thorny problem that never seems to get solved is the inaccessibility of the Japanese markets, not only to autos, but also to auto parts—in some ways, an even bigger problem for us in the near term. And we have taken a very strong line here because we've tried all those other things and they have not worked. So we are going to have to be very strong, and to be strong you have to be prepared to take strong action if your words fail.

Ms. Montgomery. So thumbs up on sanctions?

The President. So thumbs up on very strong responses, but my trade negotiator, Mickey Kantor, is in the middle of these negotiations, and he has done a great job. I think he is the best Trade Ambassador we have ever had, at least in the last 20 years. He has been very tough. He's opened more markets, taken more actions, succeeded in doing things that had never been done before. We're even selling rice in Japan, something we never thought we could do.

The last big trade hurdle we have is the auto markets and the auto parts markets in Japan. And I do not want to say anything in this interview that complicates his life. I can just tell you, the United States is committed to taking strong action. We are taking a tough position. It doesn't matter what anybody says in my administration; I support the line that Ambassador Kantor has taken. It is my line. It is my conviction. We have done everything we could do, and it is not in the interest of the Japanese government or people to be in the position they're in now.

NOTE: The interview began at 11:25 a.m. The President spoke by telephone from the Oval Office at the White House.

Statement on Proposed Legal Reform Legislation

May 4, 1995

The Senate is engaged in the laudable goal of seeking to reform our legal system. Yesterday they went much too far by adopting an amendment to cap punitive damages in all civil lawsuits. In its present form the Senate bill sharply limits the damages paid by many classes of offenders who deserve to pay much more to their victims for the harm they have inflicted upon them.

The bill now before the Senate might be called the "Drunk Drivers Protection Act of 1995", for what it does is insulate drunk drivers and other offenders from paying appropriate amounts of punitive damages justified by their deeds. I insist that we hold drunk drivers fully responsible. When they cause injury and death to innocent adults and children, we should throw the book at them, not give them a legal limit on damages to hide behind.

The Senate should reconsider its position. At the least, it should remove damage caps on lawsuits involving drunk drivers, murderers, rapists, and abusers of women and children, despoilers of our environment like the Exxon *Valdez* and perpetrators of terrorist acts and hate crimes.

All of these receive undeserved protection from the present bill. The Senate should reserve its compassion for the people who deserve it. If this bill comes to my desk as it is now written I will veto it, and therefore I encourage the Senate not to vote to limit debate on the bill at this time.

The administration supports the enactment of limited, but meaningful, product liability reform at the Federal level. Any legislation must fairly balance the interests of consumers with those of manufacturers and sellers.

Message on the Observance of the 50th Anniversary of the Allies' Victory in Europe: V-E Day, 1995

May 4, 1995

As we commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of V-E Day, a grateful nation remembers all of the brave Americans who served in World War II.

In the spring of 1945, after almost six years of fighting, the war in Europe came to a dramatic close. As word of German General Jodl's surrender in Reims spread around the