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PS/Prime Minister (Mr Powell)

cc Mr Butler (with attachment)
Mr Ingham "
Private Secretary (without attachment)
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CAMP DAVID

1. I attach a White House Press Office fact sheet on Camp David, which we are making available to the British press.

2. The fact sheet does not list all the foreign leaders who have visited Camp David, but the full list includes three previous British Prime Ministers:

- Winston Churchill (with FDR in 1943 and Eisenhower in 1960)
- Harold MacMillan (with Eisenhower twice in 1959)
- Edward Heath (with Nixon in 1970 and 1973)

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21 December 1984

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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

December 21, 1984

FACT SHEET

CAMP DAVID

During the months following America's entry into World War II, officials in Washington, following the urging of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, searched the countryside surrounding Washington for an area that would be suitable for the President to use as a retreat. There were many factors that had to be considered in selecting the site. For security reasons, a long trip could not be considered; there would also be a serious problem of communications, as the President liked to keep in constant contact with his War Room in the White House. For reasons that dealt with the President's health, his physicians preferred some place that would remove the President from the oppressive heat of summertime Washington. Thus, the criteria for the President's Retreat would be: proximity to Washington, elevation to insure coolness, and above all, it would have to be located where Presidential security could be maintained.

In the mid-1930's, the Department of the Interior had purchased a ten thousand acre tract of the Catoctin Mountains for use as a National Park. Three demonstration recreation camps, Misty Mount, Greentop, and Hi-Catoctin, were built in 1937, 1938, and 1939, respectively, by WPA and CCC workers, utilizing local timber and stone. Approximately two and one-half million board feet of blighted chestnut and local oak trees were felled for cabin work, and numerous light fixtures were fabricated in the blacksmith shop from scrap iron.

In 1942, President Roosevelt selected Camp Hi-Catoctin as the site for the Presidential Retreat. Following this decision, the entire Catoctin Park area was declared a security area and Office of the Strategic Service trainees, along with a detachment of Marines, were stationed in Camps Greentop and Misty Mount to provide area security. Construction of a main lodge and minor work required to support the President were completed during the early summer and the facility was first used by the President in July 1942.

After the successful attack on Tokyo by Jimmy Doolittle and his pilots, President Roosevelt named the secretly cloaked camp "Shangri-La" in honor of the mythical location from which he said the bombers were launched. The President frequently visited the Camp during the remaining years of his administration, holding conferences with his wartime advisors and relaxing away from Washington.

During his first visit, President Truman was described as being interested, but not enthusiastic about the retreat. He did, however, decide to keep the Camp open year round, so all buildings were made tight for the mountain-top winters. Steam heat was installed in the main lodge and some of the guest cabins. He also opened the Camp to members of his staff, when he or Mrs. Truman were not there. Although the President did not use "Shangri-La" extensively, with these improvements and changes in policy, the retreat was in use part of nearly every week of the Truman Administration.

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On January 20, 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower took office as the President of the United States and continued to use the Catoclin Mountain Retreat. President Eisenhower renamed the compound "Camp David" after his grandson, David Eisenhower. While Camp David was primarily used as a place to relax, there were a number of monumental events which took place at the Camp during the Eisenhower Administration. The most prominent of these being President Eisenhower's historic meetings with Chairman Nikita Khrushchev of the Soviet Union. From these meetings, the phrase of "Spirit of Camp David" was coined to denote what was then thought to be a more amicable attitude toward world problems.

After President Kennedy took office, he and his family continued the use of Camp David. During the Kennedy Administration, Camp David was not in use as much as it had been, but when the entire First Family was in residence, they would relax, using many of the facilities. They would also simply walk about the Camp enjoying the outdoor scenery. The Camp was a favorite place for Mrs. Kennedy and the children, as she especially enjoyed the privacy and freedom the Camp afforded her.

President Johnson used the Camp for conferences, meetings with foreign heads-of-state, and "to get away from the noise and carbon monoxide of downtown Washington" for a "clearer view of national horizons." He and his family also enjoyed the recreational opportunities offered by the mountain-top retreat.

President Nixon and his family were frequent visitors and used the Camp as a favorite place for relaxation, change of pace, and for informal working sessions. A number of conferences of national and international significance were also held at the retreat. President Nixon hosted foreign heads-of-state at Camp David on eleven occasions, including the June 1973 visit of Secretary General Brezhnev of the Soviet Union.

Although not frequent visitors, President Ford and his family did use the Camp for relaxation and meetings with members of his Administration. In July 1975, President Ford hosted President Suharto of Indonesia at Camp David during his visit to the United States.

President Carter, the First Family, and members of his administration used the Camp on a regular basis. In February 1978, President Carter received President Sadat of Egypt at Camp David during his visit to the United States. Subsequently, in September 1978, President Carter, President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin of Israel conducted Mideast peace negotiations which became known as the Camp David Summit.

Since his inauguration in January 1981, President and Mrs. Reagan have been frequent visitors to Camp David. Horseback riding along the Camp's nature trails, daily walks and swimming are among the First Family's favorite outdoor activities. Under the Reagan Administration, Camp David has been the scene of many important Presidential meetings, including a series of working sessions with President Lopez-Portillo of Mexico in January 1981 and several other meetings with Members of Congress, the Cabinet and other Administration officials. Many of the President's weekly radio broadcasts to the American people originate from Camp David, including the one about the evils of drug abuse, in which he was joined at the microphone by the First Lady. The President and Mrs. Reagan find Camp David provides a welcome respite from the hectic pace of Washington and a place where they can really relax.

Camp David is a naval installation staffed by permanently assigned naval personnel, a complement of Marines for security, and a contingent of the White House Communications Agency which provides communications support.

The natural appearance of Camp David has changed little since the original construction. The cabins are rustic board and batten construction, stained or painted a moss green hue. The native woods have been maintained wherever possible and every effort is made to maintain the natural beauty of the Camp, and retain the flavor of the outdoors.

Laurel Lodge is Camp David's main conference facility. It contains a Presidential office, a conference room and dining facilities. Aspen Lodge - the Presidential residence at the Camp - is a two bedroom ranch-style house.
