



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Independence Day Celebrations 2012

Remarks of Ambassador Bleich at the Independence Day Celebrations, Canberra

(As prepared for delivery – June 27, 2012)

On behalf of my family and the entire Embassy community, thank you. Thank you for joining us here today to celebrate the birthday of the United States. For those of you who are being technical, our Anniversary is actually on July 4, and for those of you being very technical, it is actually July 5th here in the Southern Hemisphere. But we are celebrating a few days early this year --because Parliament doesn't sit on July 4 or July 5. So, when in Rome

Today we celebrate the 236th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. 236 years ago, the Founders offered the people a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition, that all of us, are created equal. There had never in the history of the world been any government made up of the people, by the people, and for the people: A government where the people chose their leaders, and where the leaders served the people.

No one knew if it would work. In fact, one of the Founders, Ben Franklin, was asked right after the constitution was signed, what form of government it would be. And he said: "A Republic. If you can keep it." "If you can keep it."

So on Independence Day, we celebrate more than the birth of our nation, and the vision of our founders. We celebrate those who have kept it. We celebrate the efforts of hundreds of millions of men and women for the past 236 years have kept this Republic. People who worked together in good times and bad – who paid their taxes, voted for their leaders, petitioned their government, served and sacrificed in their armed forces, worshipped their faith, and respected other faiths or a lack of religious faith, who built businesses, gave to charities, raised families, and who dreamed up everything from airplanes, and cars, and telephones, and televisions and computers to the most audacious dream of all -- going to the moon. We celebrate these people, men and women who worked to make this vision a living, breathing reality. Because of their work we remain free to vote our conscience, speak our thoughts, practice the religion we choose, and define our future.



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This is a day of gratitude. We share our national day with all people, because people from every nation have contributed to the America we know today. With each generation, the United States has grown stronger, and better, from the extraordinary people from every part of the world who come to our shores. America is a nation of immigrants, made up of the citizens of every country. Which is why the face of America reflects every race, creed, and religion on earth. So when Americans celebrate our Independence, we celebrate it with everyone – our great Australian mates here in Canberra, and our friends around the world.

Today is not a day for long speeches. In fact, our second president, John Adams, said the 4th of July shouldn't be honored with speeches but: quote "It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires and illuminations from one end of this continent to the other."

So we have the pomp, parade, and unloaded guns of our Marines. We have the fantastic shows and sounds of the members of the Royal Military College Band. We have the sports and games and batting cages and pitching mound down below sponsored by our good friends at Major League Baseball. We've got bells and horns on the classic American muscle cars from our friends at the American Car club. And we have hot dogs, hamburgers, beers, wines, and hard stuff generously donated by our extraordinary sponsors whose names appear on this board.

The one thing I have left out is the promise of illuminations from one end of this continent to the other.

Well, we thought about that. You can't fire off fireworks in the daytime without creating some sort of international incident. But we don't have to. We already have illuminations flying up high above: space probes, and space labs, and the space station. In fact, thanks to our friends from NASA and from the Deep Space Communications Center in Tidbinbilla, as well as the geniuses at Questacon, we have brought some of these to the space all around us.

Space exploration connects all humanity, but it particularly connects the U.S. and Australia.

For virtually all of human history the moon was a mystery – a place we could all see but never touch. Until 51 years ago, when President John F. Kennedy offered this challenge. He said: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to the earth." Eight years later, the entire world held its breath to see if two Americans – Buzz Aldrin and



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Neil Armstrong -- would fulfill that promise. As Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin prepared to take their first steps on the lunar surface, Buzz captured the sound and images from that historic moment for all humanity. From Buzz's camera, those images passed through space to a receiving dish that is sitting a few miles from here out in Tidbinbilla. And it was from that transmission, that the world heard those stirring words – “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

One of those people was Australia's Prime Minister Julia Gillard, who was then an 8-year-old girl. When she stood before the U.S. Congress last year she recalled it as clearly as if it were yesterday. She said:

“For my generation, the defining image of America was the landing on the moon.

My classmates and I were sent home from school to watch the great moment on television.

I'll always remember thinking that day: Americans can do anything.”

Indeed, Americans and Australians together brought that image to the world, and proved that we could do anything.

If we were to identify one person who best exemplifies the U.S.-Australia connection in space, it would be the man who captured that moment on the moon and transmitted it to Australia. It would be the great American, the iconic astronaut, and one of the important figures of the 20th century – Dr. Buzz Aldrin. So we are deeply honored that we get to celebrate our friendship and America's independence, with that man today. Dr. Buzz Aldrin.

The spirit of Apollo 11 continues to this day. As we speak, the dishes over at Tidbinbilla are tracking the Voyager Space Probe that was launched over 30 years ago. Voyager is now outside of our solar system, and sending back clues about the furthest reaches yet of the Universe.

In a few months, on August 5th, Australians and Americans will be out at Tidbinbilla together to see another first. We will watch the Mars Space Laboratory land on the surface of Mars, and bring us one step closer to the next great adventure: landing a person on the face of Mars by the year 2025.

But to me the greatest symbol of the spirit of our nations is what is not already overhead. Shortly after I arrived here, we dedicated a couple of new dishes out in Tidbinbilla. As we stood on the site breaking ground, I asked one of the engineers what these new dishes would track. And he smiled at me and he said: “You know, that is the beauty of it. We



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have no idea. We just know that future generations will be dreaming up with things to send into space and that we'll want to communicate with them.”

That is the spirit we celebrate today. The spirit of hope, of faith, of confidence, of adventure, and of belief that people working together for a common cause can do anything.

So thank you Australia for sharing that common spirit. And thank you all for celebrating our birthday with us today.

It is now my great honor to introduce the Foreign Minister of Australia, my good friend, and a man who knows more about the United States and U.S. Vice-Presidents than any U.S. Vice-President – Senator Bob Carr.

Invite Ms. Sally Mansfield to give a toast

A toast, to the Queen, and the people of Australia

“Color Guard: Post the Colors”