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## **Press Briefing by Press Secretary Dana Perino and Senior Director for East Asian Affairs Dennis Wilder and Deputy National Security Advisor Ambassador Jim Jeffrey**

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Beijing, The People's Republic of China

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5:09 P.M. (Local)

MS. PERINO: It's good to be with you. Sorry that I haven't seen many of you, except if you were in the pool. It's obviously been a little bit difficult to get around. But we've had a very good trip, a very exciting trip, a very interesting trip to Asia. Obviously the President has been quite reflective, given that the past 30 years have seen a lot of changes in China, since he was here in 1975. And so he has enjoyed meeting with his counterpart today.

And I'm going to have Dennis Wilder, the Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for East Asian Affairs, read out today's meetings for you and answer questions. And also, I brought Jim Jeffrey -- Ambassador Jim Jeffrey, who is the Deputy National Security Advisor, who can provide you an update on the situation in Georgia. And then I can provide some more later on.

One thing I would like to say just to reiterate is let me express on behalf of the United States, on behalf of the President, our sympathies for the Bachman family, who suffered a terrible tragedy yesterday. The President is very concerned about the victims who are in recovery at the hospital. He is asking for regular updates and receiving them from some of our team members who have also been at the hospital. And we have the Bachman family and their extended family of the whole volleyball team in our thoughts and prayers.

And with that, let me turn it over to Dennis, who can give you today's readout.

MR. WILDER: Thank you. The President, as you know, has had a very busy day today in Beijing, beginning with the church service that he attended, then going on to the swimming events, and then to meetings with the Chinese leadership. I'll focus on the Chinese leadership meetings.

The President met with President Hu Jintao. The first subject they discussed was President Hu expressing sympathy for the American tourists who suffered the tragedy yesterday. We expressed our gratefulness for the Chinese medical assistance to that family and the swift Chinese action in looking

into the matter, and the continuing care that the mother in that family is receiving at a Chinese hospital at this point.

They then moved on to bilateral issues. The President had with him today in the meeting Secretary Paulson, and so one of the major issues that was discussed, of course, was our bilateral economic and trade relationship. The President expressed his appreciation for what has been accomplished in the strategic economic dialogue, and noted that we look forward to the opening of the bilateral investment treaty negotiations with the Chinese. He stressed that this was important to American consumers and American business interests, and both sides agreed that we would move forward on those negotiations.

They also talked about the next round of the strategic economic dialogue, which will take place in December. Of course, it will be the last dialogue of this administration on strategic economic issues, but we hope it helps to lay the groundwork for future economic and trade relations between the United States and China.

They had a discussion of the issue of Georgia, but I will leave that for Ambassador Jeffrey to discuss in detail. Another key issue was North Korea. They agreed that the six-party framework has been a very successful framework, that we have had a good partnership in the six-party process. The President assured President Hu that we are fully prepared to live up to our commitments under the six-party agreements. But the President noted that the North Koreans have commitments of their own that they need to live up to at this point, and that we are still waiting for the North to give us a positive response on the verification protocol.

Again, the President stressed to President Hu that it needs to be a robust verification protocol in order for us to move ahead. I would say that we are in contact with the North Koreans and we're continuing to discuss this. We're in contact with all members of the six-party process and we hope to see progress.

They also discussed the Iranian situation and agreed that we share the same strategic goals on Iran, but that more is needing to be done on this issue. And I'll let Ambassador Jeffrey also talk about that one.

The President raised human rights and religious freedom. He told President Hu that this is an important aspect of the U.S.-China dialogue, and that the Chinese can expect that any future American President will also make it an important aspect of our dialogue. As the President has said, candor on these kinds of issues are part of a constructive and cooperative process between the United States and China.

The President noted that he had been to church; noted that believers will strengthen China; that he sincerely believes that China will be a better place if there is more freedom of religion. And President Hu seemed to indicate that the door is opening on religious freedom in China and that in the future there will be more room for religious believers.

President Hu raised the Taiwan issue. Both men agreed that the issue is now in a much more positive

place than it was a few years ago. And the President noted his pleasure at the forward progress in cross-straits relations.

Let me then just say that the President also had meetings today with the Vice President of China, Xi Jinping. This is the first meeting with Xi Jinping that the President has had, and so he enjoyed the opportunity to get to know one of the new fifth-generation leaders. Their discussion was centered on the Olympics, which Xi Jinping has had a major role in organizing. The President told Xi that he was extremely impressed with the organization of the Games, extremely impressed with the Opening Ceremony. Xi Jinping noted that China has waited 100 years for the opportunity to host an Olympic Games, and therefore, they were very happy for this experience.

The President also met with Premier Wen Jiabao and covered similar economic issues in detail that I have noted in the meeting with Hu Jintao.

The President and his father and family members were invited to an extremely special lunch with Hu Jintao in a pavilion within the Zhongnanhai Leadership Complex. This was a great honor for the President and his family to be able to enjoy a comfortable family meal with Hu Jintao and his family. And so that was a very special occasion for both, I think, President Hu and his family, and the President and his family.

With that, I think I will turn it over to Jim Jeffrey to talk about Georgia.

**AMBASSADOR JEFFREY:** Good afternoon. As Dana said, I'm Jim Jeffrey. What I'd like to do is to talk you through the situation in Georgia, what we've done, and what we're going to be doing about it; and also a little bit on the Iran issue, the Iran nuclear issue as it came up in today's discussions with President Hu.

First of all, the situation on the ground. A few minutes ago we spoke with Ambassador Tefft, our ambassador in Tblisi. According to his reporting and some news reports, the Georgian forces have announced the beginning of a pullback of forces from South Ossetia, that they would leave all of South Ossetia. We don't have confirmation on the ground, but we do believe that some movement has occurred, but it is probably not yet complete.

They have reached out to the Russians to ask for a cease-fire, which is very important -- something that we also support -- but we haven't seen a response. There have been reports that in the course of the day there have been further Russian attacks, both air and -- particularly troubling -- possible ground attacks on the border between -- in the Abkhazia area, and we're looking into that urgently, as that would be a further escalation of what is already a very, very serious situation.

You know our position because we've put it out several times. We are calling for a cease-fire. We're calling for both sides to return to the status quo of August 6th, before the latest round of fighting broke out. We're urging both the South Ossetians and the Georgians to sit down and meet, and we're urging the Russians to cease their attacks.

As Ambassador Negroponte put it on the 8th, we deplore the dangerous and disproportionate actions

by Russian forces, and we would be particularly troubled if these attacks are continuing now as the Georgians are pulling back, and very, very concerned if, in fact, there is ground action inside of Georgia proper, that is outside of these areas of Abkhazia and Ossetia.

In terms of how we've responded to this, the President was informed immediately on Friday, when we received news of the first two SS-21 Russian missile launchers into Georgian territory. He immediately -- this was at the Great Hall -- he immediately met with President Putin. They had a discussion. The President then engaged with his national security staff continuously over the last two days. He has spoken with -- again with Putin that evening. He then talked with President Medvedev yesterday evening, as well as President Saakashvili. Secretary Rice has spoken repeatedly with President Saakashvili, as well as with her Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Lavrov, and many European leaders.

Admiral Mullen, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, is in contact with his Russian counterpart. Ambassador Negroponte, the number two in the State Department, called in the Russian chargé on Friday to lay out our position. We have been in further contact with the Russians today, and we will continue to be in contact. In addition, it is quite possible that the President will speak with President Sarkozy of France, who, of course, has the presidency of the European Union at the moment.

We're working very, very closely with the Europeans. President Sarkozy has issued a statement calling for the same actions that we are looking for, which is, again, a cease-fire and a withdrawal of forces to the beginning positions, and negotiated solution. The European Union is mobilizing their diplomatic activities. We have sent an envoy to the region and we will continue to work in the U.N. with the OSCE, which has a mission in South Ossetia, and with the international community, to bring this extremely dangerous situation to an end.

In terms of Iran, the President put particular emphasis on this during his discussions with President Hu, describing the disappointing response that we have received to the offer of the P5-plus-1, in terms of a freeze-for-freeze as a first step to a suspension of enrichment and a suspension of sanctions. The Iranian response, in our view, was not adequate. President Hu confirmed that both the U.S. and China have the same strategic objectives and they're looking forward to working in more detail with us in the days and weeks ahead to try to move this process forward.

That's all I have for you at this point.

Q There are reports that the Russian navy has moved to blockade Georgia. Do you have any information about that? Any confirmation from your side?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: We have seen these reports. I can't confirm them through our normal means of confirming these reports, but we have seen them, yes, and it would be consistent with other steps that they have taken.

Q Does that alarm the U.S.? I mean, what is your view of it, if true?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: We're alarmed by this entire situation, and every escalatory step is a

further problem.

Q Will the Georgian withdrawal from South Ossetia kind of, de facto, calm the situation, if they're withdrawing as the Russians have demanded?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: If the goal of this entire situation is to return to the situation a week ago, then certainly it would, which is why we've been pushing both sides to pull back, to have a cease-fire, and to start talking to each other. We're going to have to evaluate how people react to the Georgian pullback, particularly once it's complete, and we'll see when that occurs.

Q Can you give us a little more of a readout on the President's discussions with Mr. Putin, and what do you think the Russians' end game is?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: I can't go into detail. The President laid out our position. He asked for the Russian views. Putin, in particular, was concerned about the deaths of Russian peacekeepers. We are, as well. Those people, as well as civilians and military personnel on all sides, have suffered significant losses and we regret them all. And we hope that there is no further bloodshed. There has been too much bloodshed already.

And the second part of your question --

Q What do you think the Russians are hoping --

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: That's why I was trying to avoid that one; I forgot it I think deliberately. We believe that, as the Russians have said, at a minimum, they want to stop the fighting in South Ossetia. Beyond that, we have to look at the situation and evaluate what is happening on the ground and draw our conclusions. And a key decision will be what the Russians do in reaction to a verified withdrawal of the Georgian forces from South Ossetia. That will be a test.

Q What they've done is far beyond South Ossetia.

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: That is right, which is one reason why we have condemned this as disproportionate. They have struck targets in the vicinity of the capitol, Tblisi, and there have been a considerable number of civilian casualties. But once again, we don't want to draw any conclusions at the moment. We will be in a better position based upon whatever the Russian reaction is to a confirmed Georgian withdrawal from South Ossetia.

Q President Putin and other Russian officials have been reported to have told diplomats that they're going to exact punishment on the Georgians. Is that the nature of the conversations that you had with him?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: No, they have not used that language.

Q Can you give us some suggestion of how they have responded to this? Are they rebuffing your

concerns? Are they taking them into account? Did they give an alternative explanation to what it is they're doing?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: They have expressed great concern at the loss of Russian lives, both civilians -- as you know, many of the inhabitants of South Ossetia have Russian passports and there have been civilian casualties there -- as well as the loss of lives of their peacekeepers. A fairly large number have been killed or wounded, according to various accounts. And they have stressed that. They have stressed their concern about the actions of the Georgian authorities. And I would not say that they have told us that they are carrying out punitive actions.

Q Did they give you any suggestion that they intend to stop?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: Yes, they have said that if the Georgians cease their activities, pull back and take various steps of a political nature -- that I won't get into, and to some degree, I'm not sure on all the details

-- that this situation could be resolved peacefully. So that is they have held that door open. What we need to see is how they respond to the Georgian steps on the ground, which have been followed up by Georgian contacts with the Russian government, according to what we've heard from the Georgians.

Q Is there any consideration being given to sending in U.S. military help or other aid to the ally, Georgia?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: Right now our focus is on working with both sides, with the Europeans and with a whole variety of international institutions and organizations to get the fighting to stop, get the two sides disengaged, and get people back to the status quo ante, which we define as the 6th of August. That's where we're putting our emphasis.

Q So no consideration yet, premature, or --

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: I would say that's where we're putting our emphasis.

Q And as the conflict stands right now, are you concerned about the consequences that this has for U.S.-Russian relations?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: We have made it clear to the Russians that if the disproportionate and dangerous escalation on the Russian side continues, that this will have a significant long-term impact on U.S.-Russian relations.

Q Ambassador, when the Georgia forces entered in South Ossetia were you surprised, or were you informed in advance by their intention?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: We were not informed in advance. What we had seen was a variety of attacks of a relatively low level, but still at some concern, on either side of the border involving both

attacks on Georgian -- for example, six Georgian policemen were killed earlier this week by a IED or other bomb; and some shelling back and forth; a few other killings -- so a level of violence that was higher than we had seen recently, but, as you know, we've seen a fair amount of violence both in Abkhazia and in Ossetia in the recent past. So the developments since Friday have taken a much larger dynamic.

Q Do you think that their move was justified?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: Right now our focus is on trying to end the fighting, to get people back in place, and to get a diplomatic process underway. It's not helpful at this point to try to judge what may have, or may not have happened three or four days ago.

MS. PERINO: Last one for Jim.

Q Any further efforts to be expected at the U.N. Security Council, or is that a dead end, given the Russian veto?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: It's not a dead end. We've had two meetings behind closed doors on this. We have agreed with the other members of the Security Council, which, of course, includes Russia, on some elements of a way forward, but we do not have final agreement. But as you know from following this in a dozen other contexts, including the Iranian one, day one, we're still debating and disagreeing; day two or day three, we often can come together on some final -- a compromise position. And that's what we're working towards.

Thank you.

Q Thank you, Mr. Wilder. As you know, we had an incident this morning in Xinjiang province. Did the two leaders discuss anything -- security cooperation, counterterrorism efforts -- today --

MR. WILDER: The subject of counterterrorism came up as a general topic of cooperation between the United States and China, but there was no specific discussion of the incident you're talking about or the situation in Xinjiang.

Q Okay. To follow up, on human rights and religious freedom -- as we see even in the States, it is not so easy for respecting the human rights and religious freedom and maintaining the security to go together. How did the President try to persuade President Hu to promote religious freedom and human rights in China in the future? Thank you.

MR. WILDER: I think that the President has always said to the Chinese leadership that the reason to promote human rights and freedom is that it unleashes certain creativity in your society that individualism and individual desires to express themselves through their religious faith is part and parcel to the creative spirit of your people.

One of the things that we often talk to the Chinese about is the fact that religious groups help others in

society. If you look at the earthquake, one of the interesting things that I read was that in Sichuan, some church groups actually got together, faith-based organizations, Buddhist organizations and others, to help quake victims. In China, where people are talking about the fact that there is a large gap between those who have and don't have in the society, religious groups, faith-based organizations, can be a force for helping those people.

And so I think that the discussion that the President has had in the past and that he reiterated today is that we aren't trying to impose something Western on China, that this is something that naturally develops in a society as it matures, and that it is something that the Chinese should cherish in their own people. And so I think that this was an important part of the President's activities today. He certainly made this point at the church, that China has nothing to fear from religious organizations; that these believers are good people who will contribute to Chinese society as it moves forward.

As to the question of security versus religious freedom, the President has always been very clear with the Chinese leadership that in any society you need to be very careful to not look at religious groups as somehow connected with terrorism; that the practice of religion is a legitimate thing. Terrorism is terrorism, and that's a very different thing, and that the Chinese obviously need to understand the difference between the two.

Q Did he say -- did he raise this idea --

MR. WILDER: He did not talk about that today. I'm just reiterating what he's discussed in the past on that particular issue. But that particular issue did not come up in the discussion today.

Q Dennis, in the days leading up to this trip, the President has talked about how he raises these issues in private with the Chinese leadership whenever he meets with them. But on this trip, each day he's been here so far he's raised it in public -- the first day at the dedication of the new embassy; yesterday in the radio address; today at the church. Can you put that into context for us, why this sort of new, more vocal, more public iteration of this on this trip?

MR. WILDER: You know, I've seen that speculated on in the press, and I'm just not sure I agree with that line of analysis. If you look at what the President has been doing in terms of his being the first President to be in public with the Dalai Lama, his meetings at the White House with dissidents, his meetings at the White House with house church activists, his statements in Washington on religious freedom in China -- what we have been doing on this trip, and what he has been doing on this trip, is extremely consistent with the stance that he has taken publicly.

So it's a little surprising to me, frankly, that everybody is sort of saying we're saying more on this trip. I think the reason that you may be drawing this conclusion is obviously we're in China for an extended period of time; the President has had occasions to speak to this issue each day, and therefore, it may appear to you a little more emphasis on it. But that's -- I'm not sure that's really what's happening here.

Q Well, it's not so much he's saying more about it, but he's saying it on Chinese soil, as a guest of the Chinese leaders.



MR. WILDER: The President has been very respectful of China on this trip. He has said that he knows the Chinese people are very proud of hosting the Olympics. He came to the Olympics; he was the first world leader to say he would come to the Opening Ceremony. So I think the President has shown a great deal of sensitivity to the Chinese people.

But we always have said that there are three C's to the American relationship with China: constructive, cooperative, and candid. What the President is saying in his meetings and in public is that we must be candid about these values that we hold, and that this is part of the dialogue with China -- it's not the whole dialogue with China, it's part of the dialogue -- but that we need to be true to our values, and he needs to be true to his principles. And as you know, the President's freedom agenda is an extremely important part of what he sees as his legacy. And so it would be surprising to me if he wasn't saying these things on Chinese soil.

Q A couple of follow-ups. Did he bring up any individual cases, as a lot of people called on him to do, gave him various lists, amnesty or people in Congress -- and can you expound a little bit on what you said about President Hu suggesting perhaps the door may be open? What did you think he meant when he said that? And then if I could ask a follow on Iran.

MR. WILDER: Sure. We may want Ambassador Jeffrey to deal with the Iran question. Go back to the first one -- you threw me off with Iran, I'm sorry. (Laughter.)

Q Did he bring up any individual cases of people who have been arrested recently, or previous lists -- that various people gave the President lists -- Congress gave him 600 names, and so forth -- did he bring up individual cases? And the second part was about your reference to the door opening a little bit, according to President Hu.

MR. WILDER: The President -- we've never had the President actually hand over a list of names. Ambassador Randt has provided the Chinese with a list of the persons of highest concern to us. So the Chinese know full well who we are concerned about, and that list has been shared with the Chinese side by Ambassador Randt, by Secretary Rice, by others in the administration. The President certainly talked about human rights and freedom, but he did not get into individual cases.

I think that it's difficult for me to explain the President of China's statements, so I'm not going to try and overanalyze this. But I thought that the President of China was trying to say that we have made improvements and we are making improvements in the situation of personal freedoms in China. I think President Hu was saying, you've gone to church today; you've seen Christians worshiping openly in our society. I took it to mean that, I think in the future there will be more room for Christians and other religious groups in this society.

What I hope he means is that the registration of house churches will begin. We very much hope that there are certain things that they can do here in the near future that would be very helpful. Many of these house churches, as you know, live on the edge of Chinese law. Many of them would like to have legal status, and we hope that the Chinese government can move in that direction.

We hope that the Chinese can move in the direction of Bibles being sold in many different places.

Today there's a restricted number of outlets for buying Bibles in China; we think that ought to be widened. We hope for a substantial dialogue between the dialogue and the Chinese government, and we look forward to the next round of discussions between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese government. So I think there are a lot of areas that we hope are part of what President Hu was alluding to today.

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: Back to Iran?

Q I just wanted to ask you, you suggested that there was a shared agreement on what the strategic goal was. Was there any agreement on what the next step might be, given Iran's answers so far?

AMBASSADOR JEFFREY: No, there was general commentary that we need to get together as we have done since we received the answer from the Iranian government to take a look at next steps. Our position is quite clear. We think that, as we have discussed before we put the latest offer on the table, that the next step is U.N. action. And we're going to be working with the Chinese and with others to try to get that. President Hu indicated that he was open to further discussions on the way ahead. Again, he referred to the importance to both U.S. and to Chinese interests and to global interests of an Iran without nuclear weapons. So, again, he elaborated a bit on our strategic commonality of views. And we'll see what comes forth in the next few days.

Thank you.

MS. PERINO: Last one over here.

Q On North Korea, Dennis, did you get -- is there any chance that North Korea will meet the initial window opening for verification of August 11?

MR. WILDER: That was worded in an excellent way. (Laughter.) Let me congratulate you on understanding the window. The window does open shortly here. But as the President said in Seoul, we need to have a strong verification regime before we can take action on removing the North Koreans from the state sponsor of terrorism list.

Tomorrow that window opens. That is the minimum time frame; it is not a deadline. At this point, I think it is reasonable to say that tomorrow probably come and go without that happening. We are in discussions with the North. We continue to try to work with them on this question of a robust verification regime. But we aren't at the point where we are satisfied with what they have put on the table thus far.

So these discussions will continue. Ambassador Hill has been having discussions here in Beijing with his Chinese counterpart on this issue. We will continue to have those discussions while we're still here in Beijing. And this is very much a six-party process, and the six parties are working on this.

MS. PERINO: All right, we'll provide a little commentary on camera, if you'd like.

I guess Mike.

Q Dana, what's the latest, from the U.S. perspective, on the tourist attack? Is it over? Would, by American standards, we consider it a hate crime, because clearly these people were Anglos? Anything further, from your perspective, on the attack?

MS. PERINO: First of all, let me express on behalf of the President and the United States our deepest sympathies for the Bachman family and their extended volleyball family. Obviously the whole United States Olympic team has been struck by this, but of course they are, as always, stoic and stalwart, and are wonderful competitors, and so they are moving on to compete in the spirit in which the Bachman family would want them to.

President Bush thanked President Hu today for the help that the Chinese government has provided in providing care, as well as committing and putting the resources towards a comprehensive and thorough investigation.

I believe first reports indicate that this was apparently a random act of violence. I would point out to you that while two Americans were attacked, so was their Chinese tour guide. And I think that until the investigation is complete, it would not be appropriate for me to comment any further as to the origins of this crime.

But clearly a tragedy for the family, for their community back home, and for the entire United States. And President Bush has been asking for updates on the health of the Chinese tour guide, as well as the American who remains in the hospital trying to recover from that attack. Our team has been on the ground there at the hospital and providing the President those updates, and we will continue to support them in any way we can.

Others? Mark.

Q Dana, while we have you on camera, can we ask you to summarize the state of play in terms of what America is asking both of Georgia and Russia? It sounds, frankly, like you're much more concerned with what the Russians are doing at this point.

MS. PERINO: Our main concern is for the loss of life and for the innocent civilians who are caught in the middle of this conflict. What we are asking is that all parties commit to a cease-fire -- the Russians and the Georgians and the South Ossetians, as well -- and that the Georgians and the South Ossetians could return to the dialogue, the direct dialogue that they were having beforehand.

What we are asking is for all parties, including the Russians, to return to what we call the status quo ante of August 6th. This is before the most recent hostilities escalated. We are very concerned about the disproportionate response that we believe Russia has engaged in. That is why President Bush spoke last night with President Medvedev. He also spoke with President Saakashvili.

President Bush will also speak today to President Sarkozy, who is currently the EU President. We are

going to be working on multiple levels in a multilateral way in order to try to address this as quickly as possible for the well-being of everyone involved -- the troops that are involved and the innocent civilians who are caught in the middle.

David.

Q Dana, the President spoke in very serious tones about this in calling for the cease-fire and for the Russians to pull back to the status quo. It would appear by what happened in the 24 hours since the President said that that he's been ignored by the Russians.

MS. PERINO: Well, let me point out something in addition that has happened in the last 24 hours. Apparently there are reports that the Georgians have started to pull back from South Ossetia. This, if true, could help us lead to a peaceful solution. That is what President Bush had asked of the Georgians and the Russians as they work towards a cease-fire. So let us continue to monitor that, see if that gets us to the next step, which is what we've been asking for.

Q The Russians have done just the opposite. If all the reports are true -- the navy now blockading, additional bombers dropping additional weapons -- it seems as if the Russians are doing just the opposite of what the President asked them to do.

MS. PERINO: Remember, what Ambassador Jeffrey has just reported is that we have new reports that apparently the Georgians have started to pullback from South Ossetia. That was one of the conditions that needed to occur so that we could have a cease-fire. All that other escalation is absolutely nothing that we could support. In fact, we have said it is deplorable.

And I think what we need to do right now is continue to work to try to solve this peacefully and this, if it is true, they've been able to pull out, if the Georgians have been able to start pulling out of South Ossetia, that might get us to where we need to be to start the cease-fire.

Q Maybe I should ask you this way: Does the President find it surprising that when he asked the Russians if they could pull back, then they do just the opposite, that's a bit of a bother?

MS. PERINO: Let me remind you that part of the -- everybody needed to take action. That included the Georgians in order to end the current hostilities. We are 100 percent focused on solving this peacefully. President Bush does think that the Russian response has been disproportionate. We are very concerned about the innocent people, especially inside of Georgia. We respect Georgia's territorial integrity and we expect Russia to do the same.

Q There's a report today in the Australian press, the Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, who was sitting two rows behind President Bush and Prime Minister Putin at the Opening Ceremony, oversaw and overheard a very heated discussion, or very animated discussion between Mr. Bush and Mr. Putin. Can you tell us if that did, in fact, occur, if you know at all? And if so, according to Mr. Rudd, it was about Georgia.

MS. PERINO: Well, I think me responding to a third party observation -- I'm not going to respond to Prime Minister Rudd. What I will tell you is, yes, President Bush had a chance to talk to Prime Minister Putin, both at the lunch and then again at the Opening Ceremonies. I'm not at liberty to talk about the details of that discussion, but what I will say is that President Bush has worked hard to establish with leaders from Russia, or from China, and other places where we have complex relationships, a relationship based on trust. And because of that, they are able to speak very candidly with one another and very honestly. So I would not be surprised by the description, but I didn't have firsthand knowledge of it and I won't comment on Prime Minister Rudd's observations.

All right, thanks everyone. Have a good night.

Q Thank you.

END 5:49 P.M. (Local)

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