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For Immediate Release
April 19, 2008

President Bush Participates in Joint Press Availability with President Lee Myung-Bak of the Republic of Korea

Camp David

 [In Focus: Global Diplomacy](#)

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 [Presidential Remarks](#)

 [Audio](#)

 [Photos](#)

11:17 A.M. EDT

PRESIDENT BUSH: Welcome. We're glad you're here, Mr. President, and we're glad you brought Mrs. Kim. We had a wonderful dinner last night, and looking forward to having lunch, too, today.

We've had great visits. And this is an important visit for me to get to know you. I heard about your background -- I admire your strength of character, and this is an important visit to strengthen the relationship between our two countries and I believe we have done so.

President Lee is the first Korean President to visit Camp David. And I don't know if the American citizens understand your nickname -- you're known as the "Bulldozer." (Laughter.) He said to make sure that it was a bulldozer with a computer. (Laughter.) And the reason why is this is a man who takes on big challenges and he doesn't let obstacles get in the way. I like his spirit, I like his candor, and I like his optimistic vision. But most of all I really appreciate his values.

A good relationship is based upon common values, and our countries share common values -- values of the rights of each individual to live in a free society. We believe in human dignity and justice.



We discussed a variety of issues. We talked about our defense cooperation. In 2004, our nations began an alliance transformation that has involved realigning U.S. forces in Korea and relocating some of them from the Peninsula. We're in constant touch and we're constantly reassessing our needs and we have reaffirmed our need to remain in close dialogue. And we reached an agreement to maintain the current U.S. troop level on the Peninsula. This is a mutual agreement that benefits both our nations and will strengthen our alliance. And Secretary Gates and Defense Minister Lee will coordinate its implementation.

Korea has asked to upgrade its foreign military sales status with the United States and to have the same access to U.S. military technologies as NATO and other key allies, and I strongly support this request and have instructed Secretaries Rice and Gates to work with the Congress to get this done.

Yesterday, our nations signed a Memorandum of Understanding on security improvements necessary for Korea to enter the visa waiver program. This was a very important issue for the President. We spent a lot of time talking about this issue. These security enhancements put Korea on the path toward visa-free travel to the United States for its people. We promised that both sides will work hard on this issue so that Koreans will be visiting the United States under the visa waiver program before this year ends.

The United States and Korea are working to improve security and advance freedom in the Asia Pacific region. Together with China, Russia and Japan, our nations are pressing North Korea to fulfill its obligations to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Thanks to the six party framework, North Korea has begun disabling the plutonium production facilities at Yongbyon. And now North Korea must fulfill its other obligations: provide a full declaration of its nuclear programs and proliferation activities in a verifiable way.

President Lee and I discussed our mutual concern for the human condition in North Korea. We are -- our hearts break when we hear these stories of families that have been torn apart or people being subjected to harsh work camps because of their beliefs. We believe in basic rights, and we believe those rights ought to be extended to the people of North Korea.



We're also thankful for the Koreans' contributions to young democracies, whether it be Afghanistan or Iraq or Lebanon. And we want to thank you and your people, Mr. President, for those sacrifices.

And then of course we talked about our economy. As a former CEO, President Lee understands the importance of trade. First of all, I want to thank you, Mr. President, and I appreciate your decision to reopen the Korean market to American beef -- consistent with international standards. This is good news for Korean consumers and it's good news for American beef producers. As a matter of fact, we had some good American beef last night for dinner. (Laughter.)

Now, our United States Congress must reject protectionism. It must not turn its back on a friend and ally like Korea, and must approve the free trade agreement with Korea this year. So the President was wondering -- he's been reading about the decision by our Speaker that effectively killed the Colombia free trade agreement, unless of course she gives us a date certain of when there will be a vote. He wonders if this protectionist sentiment is such that it will cause me, for example, not to continue to fight for free and fair trade.

I assured him that the Korea trade agreement is a priority of this administration. And I assured him that we will press hard with the United States Congress. It's in our country's interests that we approve this agreement, Mr. President. It's in our interests that we stand with our friends and allies. And it's in the interests of the world that we complete the Doha negotiations for the WTO. We spent some time discussing that as well.

And then finally we talked about our mutual desire to have a rational, practical approach to international climate, the international climate issue, global warming. How can you possibly have an international agreement that's effective unless countries like China and India are not [sic] full participants. And that's why I assured him this major economies meeting that is taking place in Paris, I assured him I meant what I said in my speech in the Rose Garden, and that hopefully by the time we get to G8 there's a serious effort by all major economies to become active participants in a effective strategy to deal with this issue.

So we had a great discussion. Really appreciate you coming. And Mr. President, the podium is yours.

PRESIDENT LEE: (As translated.) Thank you very much, Mr. President. First of all, thank you for inviting me and my wife to this beautiful place called Camp David. I would like to extend my thanks to President Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush for their invitation, and I was warmly welcomed by the American people. If I were to have known I was going to get this warm hospitality, I should have come earlier. (Laughter.)



Again, I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to you, Mr. President. And also we had a very productive discussion. We had a very open and frank discussion, and I believe that today's meeting was very constructive, and I'm very thankful for having this meeting, Mr. President.

The Korea-U.S. alliance was pivotal in ensuring peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula, but also that of northeast Asia. Now, as the international situation as well as the economic and security situation change

dramatically, our alliance is also called upon to undergo new changes. And so in order to effectively respond to the need for change, President Bush and I agreed to develop our alliance into an alliance based on freedom and democracy, human rights and the principle of market economy -- otherwise known as the 21st century strategic alliance, something that will contribute to global peace and security as well.

Furthermore, we both agreed to -- based on such mutual understanding and common ideas, to discuss specific ways to realize our vision for this strategic alliance. So we'll discuss this when President Bush visits Korea later on this year.

Just a while ago President Bush mentioned as for the U.S. forces in Korea, he decided to maintain the current troop levels in Korea. Is that right, Mr. President?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, that's an accurate statement.

PRESIDENT LEE: Both of us reaffirmed once again that under no circumstances would we allow North Korea to possess nuclear weapons. Also, we agreed to work together closely within the six-party talks so that North Korea can fully and completely give up all their nuclear weapons programs as soon as possible.

Korea and the United States do not harbor any hostile intent towards North Korea. We both agreed to work together to help North Korea escape international isolation and to improve the lives of the North Korean people. President Bush supported our policy towards North Korea, including our denuclearization "opening-3000" policy, and also said that the United States will continue to dialogue -- seek ways to promote dialogue in exchange with North Korea.



Both President Bush and I agreed that the passage of the KORUS FTA will benefit not only our two economies, but also act as a catalyst to substantially improve exchange and cooperation in all areas between our two countries. And so we agreed to work closely together for the speedy ratification of the KORUS FTA. And Mr. President, he agreed to work very closely and to convince the United States Congress to pass the KORUS FTA by the end of this year. I would like to thank him for that.

Among the achievements of my visit to the United States -- there were a lot of difficulties for Koreans to visit the United States; most of all the difficulty they faced was due to the difficulty in getting visas to enter the United States. However, the Republic of Korea has signed a Memorandum of Understanding to take part in the visa waiver program, and we agreed to implement this by the end of this year. Once that happens our cultural exchanges, as well as our economic exchange and the exchange in many areas will expand, and I have high hopes for that.

At the same time, President Bush and I agreed to expand exchange programs for our youth and students, which will ensure a brighter future for our bilateral ties.

We reaffirmed that nuclear nonproliferation and the promotion of democracy and human rights are all a vital component in making our world a better, safer place. In this regard, in order to ensure sustainable development, we agreed to work closely on the issues of climate change and energy securities, matters which are very serious and concerns us all.

During the summit meeting today I was very heartened to hear that the United States and President Bush personally had a very strong interest in fighting global warming and climate change. That's a very important decision and I hope that the United States -- and I have confidence that the United States will take a leading role in this issue, and I have confidence Mr. President Bush will do that as well.

I invited President Bush and Mrs. Laura Bush to visit Korea this summer. And I'm pleased to note that President Bush agreed and readily accepted to come visit Korea with Mrs. Bush.

Once again, today's meeting was an opportunity for us to reaffirm our mutual trust, and we agreed to work together to solve issues not only of the Peninsula, but to work closely and cooperate with issues of global concern.



I'm very happy with the results of today's meeting. And we will work very closely together to see the complete dismantlement of the nuclear weapons program of North Korea, and we will work closely within the six-party talks framework. And we must see the satisfactory conclusion, which will lead to helping the North Korean people lead better lives, with dignity.

Once again, Mr. President, I'm very happy to have met you, Mr. President, as well as Mrs. Laura Bush, and thank you for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation by the people of America. We will work closely together with a future-oriented mind. And I promise you I will do my very best, Mr. President.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you, sir. Thank you. We'll do two questions a side, starting with Deb.

Q I have the same question for both of you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: I warned him that this was going to happen. (Laughter.)

Q Well, at least it's not two questions.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, I know -- (laughter.)

Q First to President Bush, isn't scaling back demands about what North Korea has to declare giving in to a country that has repeatedly demonstrated that it can't be trusted? Former U.N. Ambassador Bolton has called it a complete collapse in the deal. And your critics are saying that you're selling out to get an agreement. Why is it not?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Look, we're going to make a judgment as to whether North Korea has met its obligations to account for its nuclear program and activities, as well as meet its obligations to disable its reactor. In other words, we'll see. The burden of proof is there. We've laid out -- they've made some promises, and we'll make a judgment as to whether they met those promises. And then we and our partners will take a look at North Korea's full declaration to determine whether or not the activities they promised they could do could be verified. And then we'll make a judgment of our own as to whether or not -- you know, about our own obligations.

You know, there's all kinds of rumors about what is happening and what's not happening. Obviously I'm not going to accept a deal that doesn't advance the interests of the region. The whole objective of the six-party talks and framework is to get them to disclose their weapons programs, is to get them to dismantle their plutonium processing, is to get them to talk about activities, nuclear activities. And we'll make a judgment as to whether or not they do that. But somehow people are precluding -- you know, jumping ahead of the game. They have yet to make a full declaration. Why don't we just wait and see what they say before people go out there and start giving their opinions about whether or not this is a good deal or a bad deal.

But one thing is for certain: The most effective way to deal with this issue is to do so with parties like China and Japan and Korea joining the United States and South Korea with a common voice. The whole object of this exercise is to convince the leader of North Korea to give up his nuclear weapons ambitions. That's the whole object.

And so we have yet to come to the stage where he has made a full declaration. And so we'll wait and see what he

says, and then we'll make a decision about our obligations, depending upon whether or not we're convinced that there is a solid and full declaration, and whether or not there's a way to verify whether or not he's going to do what he says he's going to do.

PRESIDENT LEE: As for the declaration of North Korea, that is a very important process. I believe if North Korea's declaration is not satisfactory or if the verification is not satisfactory, we could probably have a temporary achievement, but in the long term, that will cause a lot more serious problems. I believe President Bush shares this thought with me.

Mr. President Bush explained just now the declaration, the verification process, has not begun. We are still waiting for North Korea to declare their full program. They should not get away with this temporary measure. The United States is not dealing with North Korea alone; there are other parties to the six-party talks, and they must all agree to North Korea's declaration. So in that regard North Korea's declaration of their nuclear weapons program should be complete and correct, and verification -- I'm not sure how long that is going to take, but North Korea must faithfully cooperate with verification process.

All the parties of the six-party talks are with one mind that the verification process must be full and complete and satisfactory. I think it's inappropriate and unconstructive for us to have too many doubts before the process even begins. The process is beginning. We should have trust in the process, and I will watch this process and cooperate fully.

Q (As translated.) I have a question for President Lee. Korea and the United States have made many achievements through the summit meeting, especially North Korean nuclear issue and the strengthening of the alliance. As for North Korean nuclear issue, Mr. President Lee suggested setting up a permanent liaison office in both Seoul and Pyongyang. What are some of the follow-up effects, if you do have any follow-up actions? And do you have any thoughts of proposing a meeting with Chairman Kim at an earlier date?

PRESIDENT LEE: The process is not something that we discussed between ourselves during the summit meeting. In fact, when I was staying in Washington, D.C., I had an interview with one of the newspapers there, and it came up. Of course it was not a sudden suggestion. I did have a meeting among my staff and related ministries, and I talked about this in detail before I came to the United States.

We have a new administration in Korea, and we haven't yet to begun dialogue with the North Koreans. Inter-Korean dialogue -- there is a need for us to have dialogue all the time. Up until now we had dialogues whenever the need arose, and then it would stop. However, dialogue should be based on genuine cooperation and sincerity. And so with this in mind, I thought that it would be helpful to set up a permanent liaison office in both Seoul and Pyongyang.

As for the summit meeting between myself and Chairman Kim, I will agree to it when the need is real. And I already said publicly that I am willing to meet with him -- not just once, but many times -- but if the meeting will yield substantial and real results. I believe only when that is possible I am ready to meet with him and have sincere dialogue, because that will help to bring about peace and stability of the Peninsula.

So basically, I do hold that thought, but I'm not suggesting to have a meeting with Chairman Kim anytime soon. If the need arises, again, I'm ready to meet with him.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Steven Lee.

Q Thank you very much, Mr. President. If I could follow up a little bit on North Korea. The North Koreans agreed last year to make their disclosure. We're now in April and we've yet to see this disclosure. There are continued negotiations, a new round next week. Are you concerned that, given this record, they're not prepared to make this full disclosure, that they're stalling the process somehow? And if so, a question for both of you, how do you respond to that?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes. Of course, I mean, they may be trying to stall. One thing about a non-transparent society where there's not a lot of free press, for example, or a lot of opposition voices, it's hard to tell what's going on. Now, he has made declarations, and he's testing the relationship. He's wondering whether or not the five of us will stay unified. And the only thing I know to do is to continue pressing forward within the six-party framework.

The decision -- we've made our decision. "We," the five of us, have made our decision and that is, there's a way forward. And obviously we hope he chooses to honor his commitments in a verifiable way. But when you're dealing with a society in which it's hard to get information out of, you just have to wait and see whether they're sincere or not. Unlike our society, of course, where there's all kinds of people in the administration talking and sharing information with you -- some of it authorized, some of it's not -- it doesn't happen that way in North Korea. It's a closed society. It's a society in which the will of one person decides the course of the future.

And again, we're very hopeful. We talked about our mutual desire to keep the six-party framework in place, to deal with a lot of issues. The first one of course is with North Korea. And it's -- I can just tell you, Steven Lee, it's much more effective to have more than one voice speaking on this issue than to be the sole voice speaking on the issue. And so if there ever is going to be a breakthrough, it's through the six-party framework.

And, look, I'm hopeful. We'll see. This has been a -- I've been at this for quite a while, and there's been moments where it looks like the process is going to go very smoothly and everybody is going to honor their commitments, and then for one reason or another, there's a -- there was a setback. But the key thing is, is that we haven't abandoned the efforts to solve this problem peacefully and diplomatically.

PRESIDENT LEE: Thank you. If you correctly understand North Korea, and if you do understand North Korean society, you'll probably get a better picture why we are seeing some delay in the process at the moment. If North Korea wasn't like that, then we would have seen the resolution of this issue already. We need persistent patience, ladies and gentlemen. And we need time in order to have complete resolution of this issue.

However, it's difficult to convince North Korea to give up their nuclear weapons program, but it's not impossible. It is not impossible. I believe that. So in order to resolve this issue, I believe that the six-party talks is the most effective way and mechanism to resolve this issue, like the President mentioned. And right now we're in the stages of waiting for their declaration, and then we can move on to the verification process.

So I think it's up to you to make the atmosphere so that North Korea can faithfully abide by their promise and make the right declaration; that once North Korea does so, it is also in their interest to make the correct decision to give a full and complete declaration. And it will also help the North Korean people improve the quality of their life, and that is the best strategic choice that they can make.

Q (As translated.) I have a question for President Bush. The United States has a divergent alliance with countries like the United Kingdom, Japan. In your opinion, President Bush, what kind of alliance do you have with the Republic of Korea? And during your summit meeting today, I believe you agreed to upgrade the Korea-U.S. alliance. In order to upgrade the alliance, what kind of new movement will you take on -- for instance, the transfer of wartime operational control? And what will you do, President Bush -- do you have any intention to meet with both President Lee and Chairman Kim in order to resolve this issue?

PRESIDENT BUSH: No. As to the latter point, no I don't. I think the President described the relationship as a good one -- a 21st century strategic alliance -- that makes sense to me. So what does that mean? Well, it means we work in ways to deal with 21st century problems, such as proliferation of nuclear materials; such as working to make sure our children are educated with the tools necessary to be productive citizens; such as having a recognition that in the 21st century, a free and fair trading system will be necessary for prosperity. And that's why it's going to be very important for our Congress to ratify the free trade agreement with Korea.

It's going to be very important a 21st century alliance recognizes that China is an opportunity for both nations to engage in a constructive way. We have our problems with China, of course, whether it be human rights or how the Chinese leadership deals with the Dalai Lama or with Burma -- a variety of issues. On the other hand, you can either have a constructive relationship -- we can work constructively with China -- or we can have a destructive relationship. I've chosen to have a constructive relationship.

And so the step one is to anticipate the issues confronting our peoples in the 21st century, and step two is to develop a practical way to deal with those issues. And that's exactly what our conversation revolved around. And I'm confident that this meeting has strengthened our relationship, and I'm confident that the American people understand how important this relationship is to our own prosperity and our own security.

And so it's been a really good visit, and we're glad you came here, too. (Laughter.) Thanks for coming.

END 11:46 A.M. EDT

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