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## **Press Briefing by Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council, Dennis Wilder, on President's Trip to Asia**

James S. Brady Press Briefing Room

4:20 P.M. EDT



MR. WILDER: On Monday, August 4th, the President and Mrs. Bush will leave Washington to travel to Seoul, South Korea, to begin a seven-day trip to Asia that will also take them to Bangkok, Thailand, and Beijing, China.

To those of you who haven't been counting, this will be the President's ninth visit to Asia during his presidency, and reflects the importance of this most dynamic economic region of the world to the United States.

Crossing the International Dateline, the President and Mrs. Bush will arrive in Seoul the evening of Tuesday, August 4th [correction: August 5th], and they will hold a day of official events on August 5th [correction: August 6th] in Seoul.

The trip to Korea is at the invitation, of course, of President Lee Myung-bak, who is eager to return the hospitality that he and his wife enjoyed at Camp David in March. This year marks the 55th anniversary of U.S.-South Korean ties. The President looks forward to meeting with the South Korean President and his team on August 5th [correction: August 6th] to review the state of relations.

They will discuss the impressive progress that has been made and the transformation of the American military presence in Korea, and also discuss ways that they can begin to implement a global strategic partnership for the 21st century, so that Korea joins us, as they have begun to do, in helping to secure the peace in other regions of the world such as in Iraq and Afghanistan.

I'm sure they'll also discuss their efforts to get their respective legislatures to pass the Korea-U.S. free trade agreement that is projected -- when implemented -- to add \$10 billion to \$12 billion to the U.S. GDP annually.

President Bush will also have the opportunity to thank President Lee for his strong support for reopening the beef market. I would note that earlier this week, the first American bone-in beef reached Korea, this for the first time in five years.

Following the morning meeting and the joint press availability, President Lee and his wife will host a social lunch for the President and Mrs. Bush in Blue House. The President and Mrs. Bush will then travel to the United States Army Garrison at Yongsan for a combined troop event with American and Korean soldiers.

They will depart Korea in the afternoon [of August 6th], and travel to Bangkok, Thailand. This will be the President's second visit the Thailand, and it will be a very special occasion as we will be celebrating the 175th anniversary of U.S.-Thai relations. In other words, we established relations with Thailand, the first relationship we had in East Asia, under the presidency of Andrew Jackson in 1833.

President Bush will meet with Prime Minister Samak the evening of his arrival. They'll hold a joint press availability [correction: make joint statements] after their meetings and they will have a working dinner together.

As you may know, Thailand is a major non-NATO ally of the United States and one of our best relationships in East Asia. The President will congratulate the Thai people on the return to democracy in Thailand. He looks forward to his first meetings with Prime Minister Samak, and he will also be talking to Prime Minister Samak about

the fact that Thailand will take over the chairmanship of ASEAN -- actually, it just took over the chairmanship of ASEAN and will be the chair of ASEAN for the next year and a half. So there are many issues that they can discuss together.

On Wednesday, August 6th [correction: Thursday, August 7th], the President will make a major set of remarks in Thailand. It will be his look at U.S. policy in East Asia, both what he believes he has accomplished in the last eight years, and also what he believes the future of America's presence in East Asia will be all about.

After that, he will visit a center in Thailand called the Mercy Center, which deals with children with HIV/AIDS. And then he will go on to have a briefing by non-governmental organizations and some American government organizations on the relief effort that occurred in Cyclone Nargis. He will have a lunch in Bangkok with Burmese activists, and hear their stories. And then he will be interviewed by the press in Thailand that broadcast into Burma, so that he can give a message directly to the Burmese people.

During the time that he is doing these events, Mrs. Bush will travel to Mae Sot, Thailand. There she will meet with refugees of the Mae La Refugee Camp. It is one of the largest refugee camps on the Thai-Burmese border. Following her visit to Mae La, she will travel to the Mae Tao Clinic. This clinic was founded, and is directed by Dr. Cynthia Maung. You may remember that Mrs. Bush had a television event with Dr. Cynthia Maung not long ago, and she is very much looking forward to getting on the ground and seeing the clinic in operation. This clinic provides free health care for refugees, migrant workers and other individuals who cross the border from Burma into Thailand.

If you have more questions on Mrs. Bush's schedule, either in Thailand or elsewhere, you can contact Sally McDonough of her office.

At the end of the day on Wednesday [correction: Thursday, August 7th], the Bushes will fly to Beijing. And I will not try at this point to talk too much about the schedule in Beijing because, frankly, the President's goal in Beijing is to attend Olympic sporting events, so that schedule is still in the works. He and his family will decide what events they'll be going to. And at this point, I actually don't have a complete list of the sporting events. I know some of them that he's interested in, but he'll be making his own decisions on exactly where he'll be going.

Let me just note that we will be in Beijing from August 7th through August 11th. Some of the highlights of the visit to Beijing will be the opening of our new embassy complex. You may know that last night the Chinese had an opening of their new embassy complex here. And we will open our new embassy complex in Beijing on August 8th. The President will be joined by his father, President Bush, 41, for that occasion, and it should be a very grand event. This is one of the largest embassies in the world, one of the largest embassy projects we have ever undertaken.

He will obviously also attend the Opening Ceremonies of the Olympic Games while he's in Beijing. And he will have meeting with President Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, and Vice President of China, Xi Jinping. He will also be attending a church service on the Sunday he's in Beijing, and I think one other event -- he will meet with many of the sponsors of the U.S. Olympic team to thank them for their support for the U.S. Olympic team.

At this point, I'll take questions. Yes, sir.

Q Thanks, Dennis. The President has said that he does not see the Olympics as a political event, but a sporting event. But what is your response to those who do see it that way, particularly human rights activists who say that beyond the sports, the mere presence of a U.S. President there is a showing of support for China and for how China is conducting itself? Can you at least see that argument, and what is your response to it?

MR. WILDER: I think the President feels very strongly that what he is doing in Beijing is, first and foremost, supporting the American Olympic team. American athletes have worked long and hard to get to these Games. He's a President who loves sports. He's a President who believes in competition and the Olympic spirit. And so, number one on his agenda is really to go to Beijing to support those athletes.

Secondly, I think he would answer this by saying that he always has human rights at the top of his agenda wherever he goes in the world. The President's freedom agenda is well known. The President's work on freedom for Chinese citizens is well known. Yesterday he met with five prominent dissidents. Some of those dissidents

would not be in this country were it not for the efforts of this President. And so he has worked long and hard for the rights of the Chinese people.

So I think he would say to you that he understands that some people have a different view on this, but he believes that by going to Beijing, he respects our athletes, he respects the Chinese people who are proud of hosting these Games, and he also has yet another opportunity with the Chinese leadership to sit down and talk to them about these issues.

He doesn't shy away from these issues. I have been in almost every meeting he has had with the Chinese leadership in the last four years. He has always raised these issues. Whether it be the case of the Dalai Lama or the case of the house churches, the President is very conscious of the need for China to continue to move forward, to open up more to religious expression, to freedom of the press and other issues.

Q Given the fact that he has that relationship and he does speak candidly in those meetings, do you have any evidence that it's made a difference?

MR. WILDER: I think it has made a difference. I would not say that progress is by leaps and bounds. The Chinese system structurally does not move very quickly in these areas. But I think we have seen, if you talk to Christians, certainly, about the growth of the church in China -- some people think there are a hundred million Christians now in China. That has happened in a relatively short period of time. And that means that while these churches may not be registered and the house churches may not receive the kind of treatment by the Chinese government we would like to see them receive, it does mean that people are able to express their religious faith in China. It's just that, unfortunately, these churches are now unregistered, as opposed to registered, and we would like to see the government -- very much like to see the government register these churches so that they aren't living, as it were, on the fringe of Chinese law.

So I think, certainly in the area of religion, if you look back over the 30 years of the relationship or even the last eight years of the relationship, the room for religious expression has grown in China.

Q In South Korea, the leadership there is very concerned and upset about the U.S. Agency for Geographic Names changing the designation of a small group of islands to undesignated. Has there been any thought to revisiting that? Have you all addressed that, given that the President is going to be there in a few days?

MR. WILDER: We were contacted by the South Korean government at very high levels and asked to re-look at this question. The President directed Secretary Rice to check into this and see exactly what did happen with this change of designation. It was decided after that review that the change in designation was not warranted at this time. And so that database is now being restored to where it was prior to this change in designation, I think which occurred about seven days ago on the database.

We regret that this change in designation was perceived by South Koreans as some sort of change in our policy. Let me be very clear that our policy on this territorial dispute has been firm and consistent since 1952, and that is, we do not take a position on this territorial dispute; that we believe that South Korea and Japan need to work diplomatically to resolve this issue. But it is their issue to resolve.

Q How concerned are you, given this little flare-up and the beef -- the lingering concerns about U.S. beef, that that will overshadow the President's visit?

MR. WILDER: You know, I very much doubt that it will overshadow. First of all, I think on the beef issue, South Koreans are becoming more and more comfortable as American beef reenters the market. We understand the beef that has gone on the market is popular. And I think as more and more beef enters the South Korean market, you'll find that people -- that this issue will recede more and more.

In terms of the island issue, I think that it certainly didn't enhance the atmosphere for the visit, but on the other hand, the President has demonstrated leadership. And we have a very, very good relationship with the South Korean people. One of the things I think people forget in the midst of some of this is how firmly and strongly the South Korean people believe in the American relationship.

A million South Koreans a year come to the United States. There are many Korean Americans here. The links between our societies are strong. The relationship between President Lee and President Bush is a very warm one, even though they haven't known each other for very long. The South Korean support for the American troop presence in Korea is extremely strong. So I think that there is a very solid foundation to U.S.-South Korean relations.

Q Will the President eat American steak in South Korea? Is it on the menu?

MR. WILDER: The President eats a lot of American beef. And so we have suggested to the Blue House that it might be nice to have some on the menu.

Q I actually want to know about the five individuals who came to visit the President yesterday. What was their message? And what is the President going to deliver to Mr. Hu when he is in China?

MR. WILDER: Well, certainly the message of the people who came to see the President is continuing concerns about the situation in China. For example, Reviya Kadeer, who is a Uighur from Western China, talked about the fact that some of her children are still being harassed; at least one of her children is in prison; that she is worried that the Chinese authorities will use the excuse of security, from her point of view, to harass even further the Uighur people.

And I think that is a legitimate concern. I think that the Chinese, while they have legitimate security concerns for the Olympics, have got to be careful that they respect the rights of all of their citizens, including their minorities.

Bob Fu, the pastor from Midland, Texas, who is very close to the house church movement in China, expressed his concerns about the fact that, as I was saying earlier, house churches in China are not registered at this point. And one of the things that he would argue that should happen is the beginning of registration of those house churches who want to be registered. I think that's an important message to the Chinese government, as well.

I don't want to go through all of the different activists and their views. But basically, it was a message that, keep up what you are doing with the Chinese government. Keep talking to the Chinese government about these issues. Open the door to religious freedom, and other freedoms more.

Some of them, quite candidly, obviously had a different view from the President on whether he should be going to the Olympics.

Q Some told him --

MR. WILDER: Some of them said that they had concerns that he was adding legitimacy to the Chinese government. The President simply said that while that is a concern, I also feel that by being there, by talking to the Chinese people, by honoring the Chinese people with my presence there, I can do more good.

Q So, essentially, you're saying he feels he's buying more leverage with the Chinese government by honoring the Chinese people and attending? Is that his position --

MR. WILDER: Well, I think one of the dilemmas of this issue is that people want us to have influence on the Chinese government. They want us to take actions that move the Chinese government in certain directions. If you don't have a good working relationship with the Chinese government, how do you do that? And the President's answer would be, I need to be able to sit down with these leaders. I need to be able to look Hu Jintao directly and say, for you to progress, for China to move to that future of full attainment of the harmonious society you talk about, you must open up. You must allow people their individual rights, their individual creativity, their individual expression. If you don't, our experience, the experience of the world is, you won't get to that point.

So it's not that we're saying these are American values that you must import. That is not the message the President ever gives. Rather, it is the message of, if you want to achieve the full potential of your people, our experience is, and the experience of most of the world is that you've got to do this.

Q When we hear that the President plans to carry a message of political freedom to Beijing, that doesn't seem to

square with what President Hu himself seemed to indicate when he said at the G8, you know, thank you, Mr. President, for not politicizing the Games. How is this then not going to be a political statement if the President says he's going to deliver a message of freedom to Beijing?

MR. WILDER: Well, you can deliver the message of freedom without politicizing the events of the Games. The President will have diplomatic meetings with the Chinese leadership that are separate from the Games, and in those meetings with the Chinese leaders he will, of course, bring up these issues.

Similarly, when he goes to church on Sunday, he will make a statement afterwards in which he discusses his view on religious freedom in China. So that isn't politicizing the Games. He will not go to the stadiums and do anything that is particularly related to these issues, but he will while he's in Beijing, as he always has done, make clear his views on these issues.

Q Is it safe to say that the President, having met with some dissidents here, is not going to attempt to do that while he's in China?

MR. WILDER: I think that the schedule is still being worked through. I don't want to rule anything in, and I'm not prepared to rule everything out at this point.

Q Just to follow up, some of the human rights activists in this country have noted that ahead of previous presidential visits, summits in China, the Chinese have made gestures of freeing some dissidents or lifting some controls, but there hasn't been that ahead of this visit. Are you disappointed in that?

MR. WILDER: I think what we are looking for in China is not gestures. We are looking for structural change. We are looking for long-term change. The freeing of an individual prisoner, while very gratifying in its own right and certainly with their families and others, is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal here is to get the Chinese government to see that it is in their interest to free up their society.

So individual gestures are not what I'm looking for. Now, I think we are looking for the Chinese at these Games to show that they are making progress, to demonstrate to the world -- the spotlight is on Beijing; this is an opportunity for Beijing to show that it is widening the door of freedom of press, freedom of expression.

For example, the Chinese have announced that there will be protest areas. We very much hope that those protest areas will be open not only to Chinese citizens, but to foreigners. We hope that the rules for operating within those protest areas are open enough that those who want to protest can. We hope that these protest areas are truly like those areas that have been allowed at other Olympics. That has yet to be demonstrated, I think, that the Chinese are truly moving in that direction.

Similarly, there have been questions about the access to the Internet and other issues at the Olympic centers. We think the Chinese government needs to heed those concerns; that if China is going to demonstrate it is truly moving forward as a modern society, this is part of it.

Q You're not disappointed that they haven't made those gestures, and that in fact they have clamped down on the Internet and instituted other --

MR. WILDER: I am disappointed that they clamped down on the Internet. Obviously I would like to see all these political prisoners that we have on our list released. We have handed the Chinese lists of people that we think are unfairly imprisoned, and we'd like to see them released. Am I disappointed at that? Yes. But my point is, it's not just about these individuals. It's about the broader problems of China.

Q If I could ask sort of two parts of the question. First, you mentioned the Internet restrictions. Have you complained -- "you," the government, complained to the Chinese about this? I gather they announced this officially today that they were going to limit access to sites. And the second thing, could you talk a little bit more about the bilateral agenda, what meetings you will have, and talk about, aside from sports, particularly on the issue of North Korea, I'd like to know where things stand with that. And I heard that the President may also meet with Prime Minister Putin from Russia. Do you know about a meeting?

MR. WILDER: The President will not have bilateral meetings in Beijing with other foreign leaders. I think it's fair to say that Prime Minister Putin and the President will probably spend a few minutes together socially. But the President is going for the Games and not to do a series of bilateral meetings.

On your question of whether or not we've gone into the Chinese -- frankly I've been in meetings all afternoon. I have not been in contact with either State Department or the embassy in Beijing today on this issue, so I can't answer that yet. I am sure that we will be talking to the Chinese about these kinds of issues, and we have been talking to them. So -- but I don't know what exactly has been done today on this issue.

Q And on North Korea?

MR. WILDER: North Korea -- we are obviously all aware that the President talked about the de-listing of the North Koreans from the state sponsors of terrorism if the North Koreans agree to a verification protocol that included the plutonium program, the highly enriched uranium activities, and the proliferation efforts. At this point, we don't have that agreement yet. We are still in discussion with the North Koreans on this issue. The six-party -- all the members of the six-party are in these discussions, and we are looking for the North to come back to us and agree to the kind of protocol that all of the rest of the six-party participants believe is necessary.

We have a little more than 10 days left before the first opportunity for the President to open that window and de-list the North. We hope to hear from the North in this period of time that they will agree to the kinds of measures that are absolutely essential to verify what they have done in the nuclear area. So we are waiting to hear the North's response.

Q Would the President like that to happen while he's in South Korea?

MR. WILDER: The President would like to hear that the North accepts, whenever they accept, whether he's in Thailand, South Korea, or Beijing. I will say that without this action, which we hope the North will take, the de-listing will not occur on that time line.

Q I think it's the 11th is the end of the 45-day notification period.

MR. WILDER: Right.

Q But you just referred to, I believe, is the first opportunity for the President to de-list them. I mean, wouldn't, at the end of that period, if they hadn't agreed to this verification, wouldn't that be the end of the opportunity?

MR. WILDER: No.

Q Okay. Can you explain it?

MR. WILDER: No, the window for doing this remains open. The President has notified the Congress of his intent to de-list, but there is no sort of closure on that. Once he has given the notification, and Congress has acceded to -- then the President -- actually, it's the Secretary of State who will ultimately send this notification to Congress that we have actually de-listed, but the President will instruct the Secretary of State. But he can wait on that notification. There is no -- I'm not aware of any deadline on that.

Q What's the purpose of the 45 days then?

MR. WILDER: The 45 days is to give Congress a chance to comment, and to react to the President's decision.

Q Any security concerns at the Olympics? Obviously you have a lot of world leaders heading there. One would believe the Chinese have spent a lot on security, but we live in a post-9/11 world. Any concerns?

MR. WILDER: First of all, we have offered a great deal of American assistance to the Chinese on Olympic security. We will operate with them in Beijing in this area. We are very confident, having had a very good dialogue with the Chinese on this issue, that they have made significant preparations. So we think that the security for

these Games is in good order. But everybody needs to remain alert and ensure the safety of all those who participate.

Q Can you describe a little bit more the President's plans for attending church? Is it going to be any different from what he's done in previous visits to Beijing? And also, is it possible he'll meet with any religious leaders or other leaders at other points during the visit?

MR. WILDER: What I can say is that it's a different church than the one he attended the last time he was in Beijing. And it is a church that we were interested in attending in part because it has actually a connection to many of these house churches. In other words, the church operates as a learning center for many of these house church pastors. And so the President is eager to go and hear about their efforts to work with those other pastors. And I can get you the name later; I don't have it right here right now.

Q Is it a -- it's not considered a house church itself, though?

MR. WILDER: No, no, no, no. It's a registered church in Beijing.

MR. JOHNDROE: Last one in the back.

Q There's a lot of interest in Taiwan about Admiral Keating's comments, that there's a freeze by the administration on the arms sale package for Taiwan. Does the President, maybe after he returns from Beijing, before his administration ends, intend to approve that arms sale package for Taiwan?

MR. WILDER: Well, first of all, there is no change in American policy toward Taiwan, toward arms sales to Taiwan. This term "freeze," I'm not sure where it came from, but it is not a term we have ever used in the administration. We have a commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to help Taiwan with its own defense. We continue to live up to that commitment. There are many engagements between the United States military and Taiwan military. Those are ongoing. Nothing has been frozen in this relationship. There are many discussions that take place at various levels with the Taiwan military on their military needs. We are evaluating those needs, and we will notify Congress of our decisions on various arms sales at the appropriate times.

But I think there has been a misunderstanding in the press that somehow we have put this relationship on hold. That is not true. In fact, I would note -- I was reading a article in the Taiwan press just today about a non-commissioned officer of the Taiwan military, a woman, who has just graduated from the non-commissioned officers course at Quantico.

So we continue to have very robust relations with the Taiwan military. We continue to assist them with their self-defense needs, and that is the policy of the United States government.

MR. JOHNDROE: Thank you.

Q Do you think that that will be an issue?

MR. WILDER: I think I've talked about the issue as completely as I can at this moment.

Thank you.

END 4:51 P.M. EDT

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