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President Bush Participates in Joint Press Availability with President Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine

House of Chimaeras
Presidential Secretariat
Kyiv, Ukraine

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11:00 A.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT YUSHCHENKO: (As translated.) Dear Mr. President, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, this is a great honor for Ukraine and Ukrainian government to welcome the delegation chaired by the U.S. President. We just had one-on-one negotiations and expanded negotiations, and we can make general assessment of our talks. We are very pleased with the frankness and the atmosphere that the talks were carried out in.

And they were about the positions of our bilateral relations, the visit of His Excellency President Bush, the very recent documents that were signed. And we also touched upon the issues of the international politics and regional politics. I also want to say that one of the major issues that a lot of attention was paid by us is Ukraine's joining the NATO Membership Action Plan.



And once again I wanted to prove to Mr. President and the American delegation that when we're speaking about the MAP, we mean political and security essence. The political essence of it is that this country, when we are speaking about the 20th century, has many times announced its independence, but many times this independence failed. For the last 80 years, Ukraine has declared its independence six times, and five times it failed. It failed probably because there were no international signatures -- honor our sovereignty, and very often Ukraine looked like a diversified country, a parted country in an international community. And we are speaking here about the system of political decisions that fixed it right. And on the other hand, we are speaking about the security context.

In my opinion, there are no alternatives against the idea of collective security. And I believe that collective responsibility for security policy, or defense policy, if you may, is the best response to the challenges that currently exist in this society; that exist in the system of international coordinance.

And we received full-fledged support from the U.S.A. in Ukraine's plan to join the MAP. And in the course of the Bucharest summit, I'm sure that we will receive a positive signal in Bucharest, and that's the spirit that we're going there with. And we're sure that it will be also an advantage for those countries who are only about to determine their way there. And it was very important for us to have the road map signed. It will determine actually our applicable action plan.

This complex document determines the priorities of our cooperation in many sectors, starting from political dialogue, space exploration, nuclear policy, and ending with ecological and environmental issues.

During Mr. President's visit we signed a very important agreement, which is a trade and investment framework agreement. It lays the necessary foundation to start negotiations on the free trade area between our countries. And in my opinion it's also -- not less important is the framework agreement on research and use of space in peaceful manner. It opens new prospects for our relations. Still the relations has already had good practices.

And we also touched upon the energy issues and diversification of energy supplies. We paid attention to the energy summit that will take place in Kyiv on the 22-23 of May, on the issues regarding Odessa-Brody EU pipeline project in the concept of energy



security, and other issues that will be considered in the course of the summit.

We also spoke about the domestic political situation in Ukraine. And I would like to thank very much to Mr. President for this very fruitful and dynamic dialogue, and for that open and trustful atmosphere that was during our dialogue. I thank you very much indeed. I really appreciate it.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Dobrii Den. Thank you all very much. I am thrilled to be here, as is my wife. And thank you for your gracious hospitality, Mr. President.

I am proud to be sitting next to a leader who has strong convictions and a lot of courage. We come with a message for the people of Ukraine. Your sovereign nation has a friend and a solid partner in the United States.

Our nations have built our friendship on the love of liberty. Our people believe that freedom is the gift of an Almighty to every man, woman and child. And President Yushchenko and I understand that democracies are the best partners for peace and security in every part of the world. So we spent a lot of time talking about NATO.

First, I do want to remind people that Ukraine and the NATO alliance have built a strong partnership. Ukraine is the only non-NATO nation supporting every NATO mission. In Afghanistan and Iraq, Ukrainian troops are helping to support young democracies. In Kosovo, Ukrainians are -- help keep the peace.

Ukraine now seeks to deepens its cooperation with the NATO alliance through a Membership Action Plan. Your nation has made a bold decision, and the United States strongly supports your request. In Bucharest this week I will continue to make America's position clear: We support MAP for Ukraine and Georgia. Helping Ukraine move toward NATO membership is in the interest of every member in the Alliance and will help advance security and freedom in this region and around the world.

We also share more than security interests; we share democratic values. Ukraine has demonstrated its commitment to democracy and free markets. You've held three elections since the Orange Revolution. Your commitment to open markets has allowed your economy to grow and earned your nation the opportunity to join the World Trade Organization.

I know you're proud of these accomplishments, and you should be, Mr. President, and so should the people of Ukraine.

We're working together to help Ukraine -- Ukrainians build a better life. You're on the path to reform, and you can count on our continued support. We work together to fight corruption, and support civil society groups, and strengthen institutions of the free and prosperous economy. And as you mentioned, Mr. President, we're expanding our economic partnership with trade and investment cooperation agreement.

So, Mr. President, we have a deep relationship, an important relationship. And I want to thank you for your friendship. I appreciate what you've done to advance the cause of freedom, and I look forward to continuing to work with you during my time as President to make sure our relationship endures for the years to come. Thank you, sir.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. Do you think that Russia is applying undue pressure and threats to accomplish its goals at NATO on missile defense and stopping the Membership Action Plans of Ukraine and Georgia?

And President Yushchenko, what do you think of Moscow's tactics?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Just because there was a bunch of, you know, Soviet-era flags in the street yesterday doesn't -- you shouldn't read anything into that. I -- look, this is an interesting debate that's taking place, and it's -- you know, as every nation has told me, Russia will not have a veto over what happens in Bucharest, and I take their word for it. And that's the right policy to have.

I'm going to work as hard as I can to see to it that Ukraine and Georgia are accepted into MAP. I think it's in our interests as NATO members, and I think it's in Ukrainian and Georgian interests, as well.

And on missile defense, we'll see. I've made it abundantly clear to the -- President Putin that the missile defense system is not aimed at defending against Russia. After all, Russia could easily overwhelm the missile defense systems that we have in -- that we've envisioned. These systems are aimed at a nation out of the Middle East, for example, that could launch an attack against Europe and -- just like our systems out in the Far East are aimed at helping protect ourselves from single or dual-launch regimes.

So obviously we've got a lot of work to do to allay suspicions and old fears, but I believe we're making pretty good progress along those lines.

PRESIDENT YUSHCHENKO: (As translated.) When we're speaking about Ukrainian politics of joining the MAP and NATO membership, I would like to mention a couple basic things. First, this is not a policy against somebody. We are taking care of our national interest.

Taking a look at our history, it's very rich in many tragedies for Ukrainian state that only a system of collective defense and security, international guarantees of the political sovereignty for Ukraine and territorial integrity, will give the full response to the internal question in Ukraine. And I'm sure that for any Ukrainian who takes care of the future for Ukraine, a stable future for Ukraine, the issue of joining MAP is probably the most high-quality response to all the basic and fundamental interests of Ukraine.

Secondly, I would like the debates that are now being carried out in Europe and in the world regarding Ukraine's prospects of joining the MAP and then after, NATO, form any new obstacle. I'm sure that we are doing -- we're taking the right track and we are acting within the framework of our national sovereignty. Our nation is determined and it corresponds to our political reasonability for the security of the state.

I would like basic and fundamental principle of work of the Alliance -- I mean, the Open Door policy would be replaced by the veto right by the country which is not even a member of the Alliance. I'm sure that we're witnessing a very hot and overheated emotional discussion where there are few rules, or even sometimes very little respect. But at the end of the day, the wisdom should win.

And I want to firmly state that I'm only governed by a single issue. I want to bring calmness, stability, and security stability in particular, to this state. We want to be speaking about the Ukrainian presence in the world. We want to speak about the internal country. That's why only through these motives shall we want to have that dialogue, the talks.

And what we have in our society, I mean part of the political forces do not share this opinion. I think that this is all natural, because it's quite natural that today, like some hundreds of people with red flags were in the square -- this is remarkable because the Ukrainian famine was built under the same flags as the Ukrainian oppression. These were the flags that caused totalitarianism and suffering that caused many deaths of millions of people. And I'm sure that the Ukrainian communist party may also appear one day in Ukraine that will be standing under the flags of the nation. But apparently we still need to have another Moses to bring people over the desert for 40 years, for those who lost national interest and forgot about it and continue living in the past. I don't want this personality, in person, and I just want to show my vision and the ideology.

Q The question to President Bush. Were you able to persuade France and Germany to give positive answer on the Ukrainian issue, and how your visit is remarkable to having that decision?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you. We have been working with all nations in NATO for a positive outcome because I

strongly believe NATO membership is -- for Ukraine and Georgia is in the interest of our organization. And so I have personally talked to quite a few leaders. Secretary Rice has been talking to her counterparts. Mr. Hadley has been talking to his counterparts. And there's a lot of discussions going on. And I wouldn't prejudge the outcome yet. The vote will be taken in Bucharest.

And my stop here is -- should be a clear signal to everybody that I mean what I say, and that is, I mean that it's in our interest for Ukraine to join. And so, therefore, one should -- but you ought to take more than my stop -- more from my stop than just a -- trying to send a signal on NATO. I firmly -- well, first of all, I was impressed, like most Americans, by the Orange Revolution. You probably don't know this, but a lot of Americans were -- were really, really touched and pleased to see what took place here.

And I told the President that Ukraine is -- you know, has caught the imagination of a lot of our fellow citizens over the last decade or so, and that you'll have good friends. The key, of course, is to have government that's open, government that's transparent, government that's non-corrupt, government that actually listens to the voices of the people as it makes laws, which is what's happening.

But, no, this is a good trip, and I'm really thrilled to be here. As the President said, it took you too long to get here, and I admit it, but nevertheless, better late than never, as they say. And I'm thrilled to be here, and I want to thank you for your hospitality.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. How confident are you of resolving your differences over the missile shield with President Putin during your talks in Sochi? And also, sir, there was a growing impression that you are looking, perhaps, at a trade-off in which the U.S. would soften its push for Membership Action Plans in NATO for Ukraine and Georgia if Russia acquiesces on missile defense. Could you please address that as well?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Yes, I'll be glad to address it. That is a misperception. I strongly believe that Ukraine and Georgia should be given MAP, and there's no trade-offs, period. As a matter of fact, I told that to President Putin on my phone call with him recently. I said, you just got to know, I'm headed to Bucharest with the idea in mind of getting MAP for Ukraine and Georgia, and you shouldn't fear that, Mr. President. After all, NATO is an organization that's peaceful, or NATO is an organization that helps democracies flourish. Democracies are good things to have on your border.

And on the second point, on missile defense, it's in his interests that we participate and share information. After all, a missile from the Middle East can fly north just as easily as it could fly west, and the capacity to be able to share information and share technology to be able to deal with these threats is important for a lot of countries, including Russia.

So, yes, there's all kinds of rumors about things, but thank you for asking and giving me a chance to clarify. My position is absolutely solid. My position is absolutely solid. Ukraine and Georgia should be given MAP. Thank you.

Q What are the chances, in your opinion, of achieving an agreement at Sochi on missile defense?

PRESIDENT BUSH: On Sochi, I don't know, but the chances are -- advancing my logic is good, since I'll be there talking about it. And we'll see whether or not there's an agreement. But obviously we've got work to do to convince the President and people around him that the missile defense system is not aimed at Russia, or is viewed as a anti-Russian device. Well, it's not. and, therefore, it requires a lot of time, a lot of discussion. That's what Condi Rice and Bob Gates spent time doing when they were there in Russia, and that is to defuse any notions that this is aiming something at somebody in Europe. This is all aiming to protect people in Europe.

I mean, the truth of the matter is the Russian system could overwhelm the missile defense systems we have envisioned. I mean, these systems are designed to deal with, you know, limited launch capabilities. And they've got multiple launch capabilities. And so it's just -- it requires a lot of work. We're dealing with a lot of history and a lot of suspicion throughout governments. And so the President and I will try to work through these for our common good. And I'm hopeful we can have some breakthroughs. We'll see.

The other thing is, is that this will be my last chance to visit with him face-to-face as -- you know, I've worked with him for eight years; we've had a very interesting relationship, I like him. He's a -- you know, he's a person that has been a strong leader for Russia. And my view all along has been that it's in our interest -- our interests, Ukrainian

interests, European interests -- to be able to have a working relationship with Russia. And I've had that. And this will be a chance to say I appreciate being able to work together, and to be able to try to find some common interests in the waning days of his presidency.

Q The question to President Yushchenko -- please, Mr. President, say, if the positive decision is not taken in Bucharest on Ukraine, what are the next steps of Ukraine then?

PRESIDENT YUSHCHENKO: (As translated.) If not, I'm sure that we will win because the arguments that were just mentioned by Mr. President and the positions that Ukraine is standing with, within the framework of the international debate on this issue, we are every day approaching to the positive final result. This is a colossal international work, and I would like to thank you all -- in your presence, I would like to thank President Bush for the work that's been done and that will be done in both public and nonpublic way.

And we fully understand the value of the issue and its importance. Of course, we still have a lot of effort forward to receive a positive answer. I have very good belief that the position of our friends in the EU will play a very important role for tomorrow's decision, and I hope that we will be able to convince those states that still have an opportunity -- that will have an opportunity to get more information about it and eliminate all the doubts.

Frankly speaking, I don't see any other way for Ukraine, no other alternative maybe -- emotionally, I would like to say that for the nation, for the political forces, should be more devoted to this way and the issue of whether Ukraine joins or not the MAP is not the complete target, the final target that we have in the Ukrainian society. And I'm sure that in order to avoid speculations on an international level, when somebody refers to the fact that the Ukrainian nation has not decided yet -- I'm sorry, we have decided already. We're not speaking about joining NATO. We are only speaking about MAP.

Why Ukraine should be deprived of that sovereign right is -- there is a principle of open doors, which is the basic principle for NATO -- why can't we join MAP? And then let's have a meeting in a year or two, when we explain to the nation what the NATO mission is and what the collective security mission is, and then how important a response for Ukraine it is, and why there is no alternative answer for us. If any politician is troubled about this nation and is worried about this future, I am sure that the Ukrainian nation is very wise and it will make positive decision, in the course of the referendum that we going to have regarding Ukraine to join NATO.

I recall when, three years ago, we started this discussion, I think from 17 percent of those who are for and who supported the Alliance integration -- a year ago we were supported by 33 percent. During the last live debates, we've seen analytics that raised up to 40 percent and we haven't started our work yet -- I mean, the profound work. So this is quite a situation -- I mean, the attention to this issue in the parliament for the last two months just made that big progress, and the nation started knowing better what NATO is and what its concept is.

So I think everything will be fine. Thank you.

END 11:30 A.M. (Local)

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