



THE WHITE HOUSE  
PRESIDENT  
GEORGE W. BUSH

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For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
April 12, 2001

## Remarks by the President Upon the Return From China of U.S. Service Members

The Rose Garden

3:15 P.M. EDT

**THE PRESIDENT:** Good afternoon. A short time ago I had the opportunity to speak to the 24 members of our United States flight crew and welcome them home to America.

I told them they represent the best of American patriotism and service to their country. They did their duty with honor and with great professionalism. They are a reminder of the debt of gratitude all Americans owe to the men and women who wear our country's uniform and who voluntarily risk their lives in the service of freedom.

We are proud of our crew. And I am glad that they will be with their families this Easter weekend.

I know I speak for all Americans in saluting their courage and the extraordinary skill of the pilot, Navy Lieutenant -- Navy Lieutenant Osborne, who guided the severely damaged aircraft to an emergency landing that saved 24 lives.

We're looking forward to talking with the flight crew about exactly how the accident happened. From all the evidence we have seen, the United States aircraft was operating in international air space, in full accordance with all laws, procedures and regulations and did nothing to cause the accident.

The United States and China have agreed that representatives of our governments will meet on April 18th to discuss the accident. I will ask our United States representative to ask the tough questions about China's recent practice of challenging United States aircraft operating legally in international air space.

Reconnaissance flights are part of a comprehensive national security strategy that helps maintain peace and stability in our world. During the last 11 days, the United States and China have confronted strong emotions, deeply held and often conflicting convictions and profoundly different points of view. China's decision to prevent the return of our crew for 11 days is inconsistent with the kind of relationship we have both said we wish to have.

As we move forward, the United States and China will, no doubt, again face difficult issues and fundamental disagreements. We disagree on important basic issues such as human rights and

religious freedom. At times, we have different views about the path to a more stable and secure Asian-Pacific region.

We have different values, yet common interests in the world. We agree on the importance of trade and we want to increase prosperity for our citizens. We want the citizens of both our countries to enjoy the benefits of peace in the world, so we need to work together on global security problems, such as preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction.

I will always stand squarely for American interests and American values. And those will, no doubt, sometimes cause disagreements with China. Yet, I will approach our differences in a spirit of respect.

The kind of incident we have just been through does not advance a constructive relationship between our two countries. Both the United States and China must make a determined choice to have a productive relationship that will contribute to a more secure, more prosperous and more peaceful world.

I know I speak for all Americans when I say "welcome home" to our flight crew. I want to thank the families for your patience and for your sacrifice, and I wish all my fellow Americans a rich and meaningful Easter and Passover.

God bless.

3:22 P.M. EDT

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