



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
May 23, 2003

President Bush Meets with Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi

Joint Press Availability with President Bush and Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan

The Bush Ranch
Crawford, Texas

[Audio](#)

11:30 A.M. CDT

PRESIDENT BUSH: Welcome. I'm honored to welcome my very good friend, the Prime Minister of Japan, to Crawford. He was a gracious host when I visited Japan, and Laura and I are pleased to return the hospitality.

We have met nine times during my presidency. I know the Prime Minister well. I trust his judgment. I deeply respect his leadership. Our meeting today affirms the close and unique relationship between our two nations.

For the past half-century, America has been committed to the security of Japan, and to the stability and prosperity of the entire Asia Pacific region. Japan and the United States have a global alliance, a partnership based on shared interests and a shared belief in the cause of freedom.

The Japanese government demonstrated its commitment to peace and freedom, along with America, that Saddam Hussein's regime live up to its international obligations. I appreciate the Prime Minister's strong leadership on Iraq, as well as Japan's diplomatic and financial support for key regional states affected by the conflict.

Today Japan is committed to playing a leading role in Iraq's long-term reconstruction. Will also provide immediate assistance for schools, medical supplies and sanitation. Japanese forces will provide logistical support for humanitarian and reconstruction activities. I thank the Prime Minister for his leadership.

Around the globe, Japan and America are addressing threats to our common security and meeting our



common responsibilities. We are partners in the war on terror. In Afghanistan, Japanese naval ships helped refuel coalition vessels in the fight against the Taliban. Today we're working together to complete a major highway that will help unify Afghanistan, strengthen that country's economy, and weaken the grip of the warlords.

Our two nations are committed to the fight against global poverty, hunger and disease. We are committed to completing the WTO global trade negotiations, so we can advance prosperity around the world.

The Prime Minister and I also discussed his policies for reinvigorating the Japanese economy, including his plans for encouraging investment, corporate restructuring, and banking reform. I support the Prime Minister's efforts, and I support the Prime Minister's reforms. A vibrant, dynamic Japanese economy is in America's interest, and it is in the world's interest.

Our two countries are also determined to confront the threat from weapons of mass destruction and the missiles used to deliver them. The Prime Minister and I agree that we will deepen and accelerate our cooperation on missile defenses.

On the threat from North Korea's nuclear program, the Prime Minister and I see the problem exactly the same way. We will not tolerate nuclear weapons in North Korea. We will not give into blackmail. We will not settle for anything less than the complete, verifiable, and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

We discussed the fact that China has started to play an important role in our efforts to address this challenge. At talks held in Beijing last month, China called on North Korea to renounce nuclear weapons and live up to its agreements. The Prime Minister and I agreed that we must broaden these talks to include Japan and South Korea, and at sometime later, perhaps others. We are confident that our diplomatic approach will bring a peaceful solution. Yet we agreed that further escalation of the situation by North Korea will require tougher measures from the intelligence community.

Finally, I assured the Prime Minister that the United States will stand squarely with Japan until all Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korea are fully accounted for. I strongly condemn the kidnapping of Japanese citizens by the North Koreans.

Nearly 150 years have passed since the United States and Japan opened up diplomatic relations. Since then, we have gone from strangers to adversaries, to the very best of friends. I look forward to building on our strong relationship to meet the challenge of our times.

Mr. Prime Minister.

PRIME MINISTER KOIZUMI: I'd like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the President and the First Lady for their heartwarming welcome and hospitality. We were able to have in-depth and very candid discussions in a warm and friendly atmosphere.

In the 150 years since the arrival of Commodore Perry to the shores of Japan, we have developed into strong allies, and we've been able to confirm those strong relations between our two countries not just in the context of a bilateral relationship, but also in the global context. The Japan-U.S. security arrangements are a pillar that supports our alliance. We decided to further promote consultations between our governments and to make our cooperation in the security area even stronger.

Ballistic missile defense is an important agenda in Japan's defense policy, and Japan will further accelerate its consideration. In addition, we concurred on the importance of reducing the burden on the people of Okinawa.

Now, the other pillar is the economy. The Japanese and U.S. gross domestic products together would account for 40 percent of global GDP. So it is vital for the world economy, not just the Japanese and U.S. economies, but for the world economy, that the Japanese and -- or rather, it is vital for our two countries, as well as for the entire world economy, that the Japanese and U.S. economies are healthy.

And the most important mission of my Cabinet is to revitalize the Japanese economy. And I have the support of President Bush in my efforts to further accelerate structural reforms. And to achieve that goal, I'll tackle deflation, I shall never allow a financial crisis to occur. So, not just in the security area, but also in the economic area, and others, as well, I would like to promote further cooperation between our two countries on various issues, from the perspective of Japan-U.S. alliance in a global context.

We are determined in the pursuit of our fight against terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Now, of course, we have different roles, and different means to play out those roles. But to root out terrorism, Japan and the United States should continue with firm determination to join their forces.

Now, on Iraq, the President made a difficult and brave decision for a just cause, and I supported this. And our decision was right. With Memorial Day coming up, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the brave U.S. men and women in uniform who sacrificed their lives for the cause, as well as to their families.

I welcome the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1483. And I saw eye-to-eye with President Bush that we shall continue to cooperate with each other in order to build up international cooperation. Japan will actively support Iraq's nation-building.

And I believe that taking advantage of this cessation of combat in Iraq, and through the reconstruction of Iraq, we should -- the world, as a whole, should cooperate together in order to bring about peace and stability in the Middle East. And I would like to express my respect for the active efforts the President has been making in the Middle East. I shall be visiting Egypt and Saudi Arabia on this trip, and together with the Arab countries, I would like to engage in efforts to reconstruct Iraq.

The issue of North Korea's nuclear weapons is a grave challenge to entire world. We will not at all tolerate the possession, the development or the transfer of nuclear weapons by North Korea. North Korea must promptly and completely dismantle all nuclear weapons development programs in a verifiable manner. And we agreed that we would resolve this issue peacefully.

Coordination among Japan, the United States and the Republic of Korea is crucial to that end. Continuation of the multilateral talks is important, and participation by Japan and the Republic of Korea is essential. Further escalation of the situation by North Korea would require tougher measures.

In any event, Japan will crack down more rigorously in illegal activities. And the North Koreans will have to understand that threats and intimations will have no meaning whatsoever. It is extremely important for Japan to comprehensively resolve the various issues, including nuclear weapons, missiles, and abduction, based on the Pyongyang Declaration. And without the resolution of these issues, normalization of relations will not occur.

And I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the President for his strong support on the abduction issue.

In any case, I would like to take this occasion to express my heartfelt respect to the President for the strong leadership he has exerted since the 9/11 terror attacks the year before last, as well as the strong determination he showed in addressing as a wartime President. And I would like to say that Japan will, as much as possible, strive with the United States for world peace and stability.

Yesterday and today, I spent many hours -- and I've never spent so many hours discussing various issues with a head of state or head of government. And we discussed all sorts of issues very candidly and in depth. I learned from the President that the word "Texas" also means "friend." So, my appreciation, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the President and Mrs. Bush for their very warm hospitality, and to the personal friendship that the President has shown.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Absolutely.

Listen, we'll answer two questions a side, alternating. Please address -- so don't -- one of these things where you ask me and ask the Prime Minister, or vice versa. Let's just ask one question to one of us as we rotate back and forth, if you don't mind.

Scott, will you please set the example.

Q Thank you, Mr. President. I just have one question, and that's that Sharon embraced the road map today. How significant is that? Where do we go from here? And will you meet with him and Abbas in Egypt or Europe?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Prime Minister Sharon accepted the road map, and that's progress. He accepted it because I assured him that the United States is committed to Israel's security, and that since we're committed to Israel's security, as we move forward we will address any concerns that might arise regarding Israel's security.

I'm exploring the opportunities as to whether or not I should meet with Prime Minister Abu Mazen, as well as Prime Minister Sharon. If a meeting advances progress toward two states living side-by-side in peace, I will strongly consider such a meeting.

I'm committed to working toward peace in the Middle East. Last week I talked to the Prime Minister of Israel, as well as to the Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, and I met with the Finance Minister of the Palestinian Authority. I understand it's going to be difficult to achieve peace, but I believe it can happen.

Do you want to call on a member of the Japanese press?

Q I'd like to ask questions relating to the Japanese self-defense forces in connection with the assistance for Iraq's reconstruction. First question for President Bush. Would you expect Japanese contributions to the extent that the Japanese self-defense forces would go into Iraq on the ground for supporting Iraq's reconstruction?

And a question for Prime Minister. Would you consider legislating new law to enable that?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Let me answer first. I expect Japan to participate to the extent that the Prime Minister deems is necessary to fulfill the commitment. He tells me he's going to help in the reconstruction of Iraq; I believe him.

PRIME MINISTER KOIZUMI: Well, this question related to the dispatch of Japanese self-defense forces. We are already considering the dispatch of self-defense force airlift capabilities in the countries neighboring Iraq for humanitarian purposes.

More specifically, with regard to the question of sending self-defense forces into Iraq for aiding Iraq's reconstruction, now that the U.N. resolution has passed, upon return to Japan we shall study in detail what Japan can do for the reconstruction of Iraq. At any rate, the question of what Japan can do for helping Iraq reconstruction is a matter for Japan to decide.

I also believe it is important that Japan make contributions for Iraq's reconstruction in a prudent manner, in view of Japan's own strength. And we shall cooperate with the United States, we shall cooperate with the United Nations for the reconstruction of Iraq. So we shall consider what Japan can do as an initiative-taking country for the reconstruction of Iraq.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Randy.

Q Mr. President, you said today that an escalation of North Korea of its nuclear activities will require tougher measures. But right now they possess nuclear weapons you say you won't tolerate. So at what point would you need to increase pressure if they simply do nothing?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, the first step was to convince China to participate in the process of saying to North Korea that acceptance by the international community and potential help will come when they change their behavior and their attitude toward nuclear weapons. This message has been delivered, and the North Koreans are thinking about it. Should they choose to move forward, which we hope they do, then we will have the Japanese and South Koreans join the dialogue so that there's now five of us

sitting around the table, all discussing how to see that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-weapons-free.

And the importance of this meeting today should say to the world that Japan and the United States stand shoulder-to-shoulder on the issue of North Korea's nuclear weaponry. I believe that we can solve this peacefully. I believe that diplomacy can work. And as importantly, Japan and the United States will not be blackmailed by North Korean threats, and that's important for the North Korean leadership to know.

Q I'd like to ask this question of to both leaders. On this -- I understand that in your meeting today you reconfirmed that you'll seek peaceful resolution of this North Korean nuclear issue. The question is, do you think that North Korea, that regime under the leadership of Kim Chong-il can really be a counterpart in negotiations for a peaceful resolution of the problem?

PRIME MINISTER KOIZUMI: On this point let me first say that President Bush was stating very clearly that our response to North Korea would be different from that to Iraq. Now, the U.S. position, I understand, is that all options will remain available, but the United States, or President Bush was saying that he was confident that a peaceful resolution can be achieved.

Japan certainly will also seek a peaceful resolution. And I would like to engage in various ways to appeal to the North Koreans and make them understand that instead of becoming isolated from the international community, it is most important for them to become a responsible member of the community of nations -- and that is most important not just for North Korea, itself, but for the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and for the entire world.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Thank you very much.

Q A golf question, sir?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Golf?

Q What do you think about Annika Sorenstam?

PRESIDENT BUSH: I'm impressed by Annika Sorenstam. I hope she makes the cut. I'm pulling for her. And I hope I'll be watching her on Saturday and Sunday.

Thank you, all.

END 12:08 P.M. CDT

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