



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
November 17, 2005

President and President Roh Discuss Strong U.S.-Korean Alliance

Hotel Hyundai
Gyeongju, Republic of Korea

[President's Visit to Asia](#)

12:15 P.M. (Local)

PRESIDENT ROH: (As translated.) Good afternoon. I just had a very constructive and meaningful meeting with President Bush. Today's meeting is my fifth meeting with President Bush. The last time was five months ago, in June. Since this is his first visit to Korea during my administration, it gives me particular pleasure to welcome him to Korea, along with all the people of Korea.



At this meeting, we were able to reaffirm that the Korea-U.S. alliance, based on the common values of democracy and market economy, is strong and that it is developing into a comprehensive, dynamic and mutually beneficial alliance. We also agreed that the Korea-U.S. alliance will continue to contribute to peace and stability in the region. Furthermore, we were able to reaffirm that most of the major issues related to our alliance are progressing smoothly, and that the agreed points are being implemented faithfully.

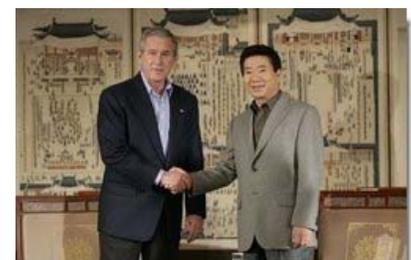
For the remaining issues, we agreed that they would be resolved in close consultation with each other, to benefit both sides, based on mutual respect and the spirit of our alliance. President Bush and I agreed to launch a ministerial level strategic dialogue to conduct in-depth consultations on the future direction of our alliance and other far-ranging issues.

With regard to the North Korea nuclear issue, we reiterated that a nuclear-armed North Korea will not be tolerated, and reaffirmed that the issue should be resolved through peaceful and diplomatic means. In order to implement the September 19th joint statement of the six-party talks, Korea and the U.S. agreed to work closely together. We especially felt that the second phase of the fifth round of six-party talks should be held as soon as possible in order to find a breakthrough in resolving the nuclear issue.

Furthermore, we had a sincere dialogue about building a peace structure on the Korea Peninsula. Going beyond the resolution of the North Korea issue, we both felt that a strong peace structure must be in place in order not only to reduce tensions, but also build permanent peace and trust, in order to create a new future for the Korea Peninsula.

It gives me particular pleasure to be able to welcome President Bush to Gyeongju, the capital city of the Silla dynasty, and the city more than 1,000 years old. I hope this will be an occasion for him to experience firsthand the beauty of Korea's fall weather and our beautiful culture. I also hope that Mr. and Mrs. Bush will come to better understand the history and culture of Korea. I hope you will have a wonderful visit. Thank you.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Mr. President, thank you. Mr. President, thank you very much. You do have a beautiful country. And we've got a strong relationship. We've got a good personal relationship, and our countries are bound together by common values and our deep desire for freedom and peace. Thank you very much for your hospitality. I've really been looking forward to my second trip to your wonderful country.



I told the President during our discussions that I felt like the ties between our two countries has never been better. In a relationship like ours, there's obviously complexities. But the important thing is to work together to solve those complexities in a spirit of friendship. And secondly, I know how important our relationship is to help promote stability in this part of the world.

Yesterday I gave a speech in Kyoto where I, with all sincerity, praised the great progress of your country, Mr. President. You have shown how economic prosperity and political freedom go hand in hand for the good of the people. And as we helicoptered in from Busan today, it's very clear that the economic prosperity of this part of the world is very strong. And so is the political freedom.

We did have a wide-ranging discussion. We talked, of course, about the North Korean issue. We talked about the need to make sure that we continue to strategize through this -- five of us who are working with North Korea to get North Korea to implement that which it said it would do, which is to verifiably get rid of its nuclear weapons and programs. It's in the world's interest that this happen. It's also in our interest that we continue to work together to solve the problem.

I see a peninsula one day that is united and at peace. And that's a vision, Mr. President, that I know you share, as well. And that's a -- it's the right vision. There's a -- there's a real possibility that by working together, at some point in time the peninsula will be united and at peace. And I want to appreciate that vision of yours, sir.

We also talked about our bilateral relations. Well, let me -- first, I want to thank the President and the people of this wonderful country for sending more than 3,000 troops to Iraq to help that democracy flourish. And it's a -- to me, it's not only a gesture of friendship, but it's a gesture of understanding that a democracy in the heart of the Middle East will help bring peace to others. And I thank you for your leadership, Mr. President, not only in -- on the troops, but as well as providing assistance to both Iraq and Afghanistan. We're bound by our love of freedom. And those commitments by your government indicate how close we are in terms of promoting the values of freedom and democracy.

I also want to thank you very much for your help for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. That meant a lot to our people. It was very generous of you, Mr. President, to do just that.

We talked about our working together on -- make sure that the world is a world that trades freely and fairly, that -- appreciate the President's leadership at the upcoming APEC summit, where I'm hopeful that all of us will join together in promoting a successful Doha Round at the WTO, with the understanding it's in our nation's interests that we have free and fair trade, but it's in the interests of developing nations that there be free and fair trade. The World Bank estimated that hundreds of millions of people will be lifted out of poverty if this round goes forward. And I know you share the same concern I share about poverty in the world, Mr. President.

At some point in time I look forward to continuing our bilateral trade relations. At the appropriate time, our governments will come together and discuss how to further trade for the benefit of both countries.

Finally, Mr. President, I look forward to continuing to work with you to promote a foundation for peace and freedom, whether it be here on the peninsula, or around this globe. And I know I've got a good partner in peace and freedom when I have discussions with you. So thanks for your hospitality. Really gracious of you to have -- make time for a bilateral meeting in the midst of all your planning for the APEC summit. And Laura and I are just thrilled to be here. Thank you.

PRESIDENT ROH: Next we will have a question-and-answer session. We will take four questions in all.

Q First, I have a question to President Roh -- actually, I have two questions. By holding early inter-Korean summit meeting, some people are saying that this could help to resolve the nuclear issue of North Korea. With regard to where and how the second Korean summit meeting, the government has said that it is not an issue as to where the meeting will be held. And I would like to ask your position on that. And second, through your summit meeting today, you have said that the Korea-U.S. alliance is very strong, indeed. But some people are seeing -- since your administration took office we are seeing cracks in the alliance. I would like to hear your opinion on this issue, as well, please.

PRESIDENT ROH: Yes, thank you very much for that question. As for a second inter-Korean summit meeting, the Korean government has always said that it is open to the possibility of a second inter-Korean summit meeting, and we wish to meet again with the leader of North Korea. But North Korea will probably have its own strategies. The North Korean nuclear issue has to be resolved and I'm not sure whether North Korea thinks that it would be beneficial for them to meet with South Korea before or after the resolution of the North Korean nuclear issues. I think that this is probably something that North Korea will have to judge and decide. This is the status that we are at right now.

And in this situation, Korea -- if we just look at the second inter-Korean summit meeting and the holding of that meeting, itself, as something that has a very important outcome, I really don't think that this will help North Korea's nuclear issue to be resolved. Of course, it's important that we meet, but what's more important is the content of the meeting, what we can agree upon and what we can resolve through an inter-Korean summit meeting. So I don't think that we should hold a summit meeting just for the sake of holding a summit meeting. We need to very sincerely consult this issue and think it over as to the content of the meeting.

And the second question was about the Korea-U.S. alliance, and I know that many people are saying many things about this alliance. I know that the perspectives can differ according to the angle that they take. I'd like to ask you back a question, actually. Since the Korean War, Korea and the United States have held various talks and we are currently in the process of handling many, many issues and resolving many issues. And I'd like to ask, when was a time where you had more issues solved and more issues discussed?

We're talking about realignment of the U.S. forces in Korea; we're talking about strategic flexibility; we're talking about deployment of Korean troops to Iraq. We're looking at the relocation of the Yongsan Garrison. Many issues are being dealt with now. These are very heavy items to be discussing in terms of my politics, and it is sometimes a political burden for us to be discussing these issues at one time. But we are happy doing this for the past two or so years, and most of these issues have been resolved very well.

I'd like to ask you to think about the past administrations and think about this administration in comparison with them. We are in very smooth and open communication with the United States. And for inter-Korean relations, as well, this is probably the most stable situation between the two Koreas that you have ever seen, and the Korea-U.S. dialogue is going on very smoothly, and we are reaching very high-level agreements, as well. And this is an interactive dialogue that we are having. It's a two-way dialogue where we engage in dialogue very seriously and voice all of our opinions and discuss them. And we think that this is an area where we are having these open communications between Korea and the United States, and we are able to confirm this open communication in our meeting, as well.

The Korea-U.S. alliance is in a very good stage and I do believe that it will continue to become even better. And I think that our frank discussions between President Bush and myself, and also among our officials, as well, will leave a foundation for even stronger ties between Korea and the United States and the Korea-U.S. alliance to grow even further.

Next we'd like to have a United States journalist ask a question to President Bush. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Mr. President, Vice President Cheney called it reprehensible for critics to question how you took the country to war, but Senator Hagel says it's patriotic to ask those kinds of questions. Who do you think is right?

PRESIDENT BUSH: The Vice President.

Q Why?

PRESIDENT BUSH: Well, look, ours is a country where people ought to be able to disagree, and I expect there to be criticism. But when Democrats say that I deliberately misled the Congress and the people, that's irresponsible. They looked at the same intelligence I did, and they voted -- many of them voted to support the decision I made. It's irresponsible to use politics. This is serious business making -- winning this war. But it's irresponsible to do what they've done. So I agree with the Vice President.

Q -- (inaudible) --

PRESIDENT BUSH: I think people ought to be allowed to ask questions. It is irresponsible to say that I deliberately misled the American people when it came to the very same intelligence they looked at, and came to the -- many of them came to the same conclusion I did. Listen, I -- patriotic as heck to disagree with the President. It doesn't bother me. What bothers me is when people are irresponsibly using their positions and playing politics. That's exactly what is taking place in America.

PRESIDENT ROH: We'd like to take another question for President Bush, please. Another question for President Bush from a U.S. journalist, please.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Your name is not --

Q Oh, I'm sorry.

PRESIDENT BUSH: You can go ahead and grab the mike if you want to. (Laughter.) But I didn't know you were called Caren.

Q I didn't hear a name.

Q Thank you, sir. The North Koreans have said they don't believe the agreement they signed in September binds them to give up nuclear weapons before they get any assistance.

PRESIDENT BUSH: Before getting assistance -- yes.

Q Yes. Are you willing to give them assistance first?

And, President Roh, your country gives a lot of assistance to North Korea already. Does that put your approach at odds with the approach of the U.S.?

PRESIDENT BUSH: The issue really is the light-water reactor. Our position is, is that we'll consider the light-water reactor at the appropriate time. The appropriate time is after they have verifiably given up their nuclear weapons and/or programs.

PRESIDENT ROH: Next, from KBS. Please ask your question.

Q I have two questions to President to President Roh. First, with regard to human rights in North Korea, I do understand that the third committee of the United Nations will be putting the resolution on the North Korean human rights to vote. I would like to ask about reports that there are differences in opinions between you and President Bush with regard to North Korean human rights issues. I'd like to ask what was the discussion between you in today's meeting. And I'd also like to ask President Roh about our principles on voting in the United Nations on this resolution.

And second, in the last meeting between you and President Bush, President Bush mentioned Mr. Kim Jong-il, and it was also -- some analysts also said that that summit meeting between you and President Bush helped the discussions in the six-party talks. This summit meeting between you and President Bush is being held in the recess period of the fifth six-party talks. I'd like to ask if you think that this summit meeting today, do you have any message to the six-party talks and North Korea?

PRESIDENT ROH: I see that the U.S. journalists are just asking one question to President Bush, but we're taking two questions from our journalists right now.

With regard to the human rights issue in North Korea, now, human rights is universal value of humankind. It's something that is very valuable. And Korea has a very proactive position when it comes to human rights issues in the world. But between the two Koreas, we have very many important issues that we have to solve politically and we always have to take into consideration the status of the relationship between the two Koreas. And that is what I have to say about the North Korean nuclear -- the North Korean human rights issue.

And I do believe that during President Lincoln's term in office, people were always talking about the slavery and President Lincoln was always attacked about not doing anything for slavery, to release the slaves. And I do understand that President Lincoln was quite slow in liberating the slaves in the United States. And this was because the President, if he took the lead in this issue, he thought that America would be divided in opinion, and this would be very serious. In reality, the Civil War did take place, and because of this issue of slaves, there was a situation where the United States was in jeopardy, and because of that, he had to go through a process to ensure that the country would stay together.

President Lincoln's first priority was unity among the states of America, and in this large framework of unity, he pursued his policy to free the slaves in the United States. As a result, before the end of the Civil War in the United States, I do understand that President Lincoln was able to free all the slaves in America, and they were actually -- and many people went into the army, many of the slaves, former slaves went into the army and fought for President Lincoln.

And this evaluation of President Lincoln's policies was carried out actually 11 years after President Lincoln's death by a scholar who was looking into the situation of the slaves in the United States. I think that this is quite similar to the position that we are taking when it comes to North Korean human rights issues.

And your second question -- what was it again, please, after human rights?

Q -- (inaudible) --

PRESIDENT ROH: As for the North Korean nuclear issue, President Bush and I engaged in a lengthy discussion on that issue. And the contents of the discussion were basically that we agreed on the fundamental principles when it came to the North Korean nuclear issue. And in the process of the six-party talks, how North Korea would act, the tactics of North Korea when it came to the details, we had some ideas to exchange, and because of that, the discussion of the North Korean nuclear issue was quite lengthy.

But I must say that we do not have any differing opinions on this. We are basically looking to resolve this North Korean nuclear issue, and we are exploring for ways that we can resolve this issue. We have no disagreement at all that this issue must be resolved. And in understanding the attitude of North Korea, I do believe that we were able to share a recognition on North Korea's attitude in this whole process.

And with regard to this issue, the authorities of both side, Korea and the United States, must work closely in cooperation and consult with each other. And we agreed that we need to have -- share an agreement if we want the whole process to succeed. And overall, this North Korean nuclear issue should be resolved peacefully within the framework of the six-party talks. And we were quite optimistic that it would be able to be resolved in the framework of the six-party talks.

If I just add one more point. The six-party talks, yes, definitely it is a difficult task to accomplish. But the United States, when it looks at Northeast Asia, the Korean Peninsula, the North Korean nuclear issue, it has many policies. But I do believe that these policies are some of the United States most successful policies, indeed.

And here in Korea, as well, the inter-Korean relations are very stable, indeed. And in the process of resolving this North Korean nuclear issue, once again I do believe that we are in close cooperation with the United States, and we have this framework of the six-party talks. And this is a framework that includes all the members of the Northeast Asian community. And we are responding to the North Korean nuclear issue together. So I think that we are holding dialogue on a very stable foundation.

Of course, North Korea is not someone that we can very easily engage in discussion and dialogue with. North Korea probably has its own very complex attitudes and positions. But this has always been the case with North Korea. And in our process of engaging in dialogue with North Korea, I think that we have a most strategic and solid foundation of dialogue that we have ever had. Therefore, once again, when it comes to the United States' Northeast Asia policies, I think that they are in a very good direction, indeed. And that was what I did mention during our talks. And when I first met with President Bush, I asked him to also listen to opinions that things were going well in Northeast Asia, that things would go well in Northeast Asia, as well.

Thank you very much. And this concludes today's joint press conference.

END 12:39 P.M. (Local)

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