

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea in Seoul, South Korea

April 25, 2014

President Obama. I would like to thank President Park for welcoming me here today. I'm so grateful for the opportunity to come back to the Republic of Korea. But I am very mindful that my visit comes at a time of deep mourning for the people of this nation, and I know that President Park and the South Korean Government are focused on responding to the tragedy of the ferry *Sewol*.

In our press conference later, President Park and I will have the opportunity to address a range of issues that we'll be discussing here today. But for now, I just wanted to express, on behalf of the American people, our deepest sympathies for the incredible and tragic loss that's taken place. As allies, but also as friends, we join you in mourning the lost and the missing and especially so many young people, students who represented the vitality and the future of this nation.

So, President Park, I thought that it would be appropriate and fitting for us to begin today by honoring the lost and the missing. And our delegation, out of respect, would appreciate the opportunity to join together in a moment of silence.

[At this point, a moment of silence was observed.]

President Park. Mr. President, thank you so much for making this proposal to hold a moment of silence for the victims of the ferry *Sewol*. Right after the tragic accident, you personally expressed your condolences and your sympathies, and you were unsparing in providing active U.S. assistance, including the dispatch of salvage vessels. The Korean people draw great strength and courage from your kindness.

Just as the American people were able to rally together in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks and were able to prevail over difficult times, so too, I am sure that Korean people will, in fact, pull through this moment of crisis and be able to achieve the renewal of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. President, my sincere welcome to you once again on your visit to Korea, and may our summit meeting today kick off the next 60 years and produce very meaningful results that allow us to do so.

President Obama. Well, thank you, President Park. The Republic of Korea is our—one of our strongest allies in the world. I'm looking forward to our discussion and to reaffirming America's unshakeable commitment to South Korea and its security.

One last point I wanted to make: I have with me this American flag that I believe our protocol people have. In the United States, we have a tradition. After the loss of our servicemembers and veterans, we present a flag in their honor to their loved ones. This flag was flown over the White House the same day as the sinking of the *Sewol*. And in that spirit, I'm presenting this American flag to you and the people of the Republic of Korea on behalf of the American people. It reflects our deep condolences, but also our solidarity with you during this difficult time and our great pride in calling you an ally and a friend.

President Park. Mr. President, thank you so much again for sharing in our sorrow, the sorrow of the Korean people as well as the bereaved families, and for your gracious gesture.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:21 p.m. at the Blue House. President Park spoke in Korean, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : South Korea, President Park.

Locations: Seoul, South Korea.

Names: Park Geun-hye.

Subjects: South Korea : President; South Korea : President Obama's visit; South Korea : Relations with U.S.; South Korea : Sewol ferry, sinking.

DCPD Number: DCPD201400289.