

Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2017

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan in Tokyo, Japan

November 6, 2017

Prime Minister Abe. Good evening, everyone. My name is Shinzo Abe. I'm extremely delighted to host tonight's banquet here at the State Guest House in honor of the very first visit to Japan by my dear friend, President Trump, and Madam First Lady, Ms. Melania Trump.

Yesterday's golf diplomacy between Donald and me attracted so much attention, and we actually made everything public, except for the score. And through golf, we could demonstrate to the world how strong the bond is between Japan and the United States.

But Donald and I are not the first who promoted this unique golf diplomacy. Just 60 years ago, my grandfather, Prime Minister Kishi, and President Eisenhower are the ones who initiated this tradition. And after the golf match, President Eisenhower shared two lessons with my grandfather. One, once you become a President of the United States, you need to be at the table with a group of people whom you don't like to hang out. Second, when it comes to playing golf, you can play golf only with those who you really, really like to hang out.

But speaking of my relationship with President Trump, that is not enough. If I may add another lesson to the legacy of Prime Minister Kishi and President Eisenhower, I would say it like this: When you play golf with someone not just once, but for two times, the person must be your favorite guy. So yesterday we had the pleasure of playing golf together with Mr. Hideki Matsuyama. And tonight we are so honored to have the participation of Mr. Isao Aoki, who is a pioneer in Japanese golf.

Even during the time that I played golf with President Trump, the President and I were talking about Mr. Aoki. It is all about how his putting that was something that the entire world were mesmerized. And Donald told me as follows: Mr. Aoki's putting was just, like, super, super artistic. But you should never try to do the same, because that is the only—thing that Mr. Aoki can only do, and you will not be able to do that. So next time we play golf together, I would love to have Mr. Aoki to join us and enjoy the time that I will spend with Mr. Trump.

Speaking of the First Ladies, I understand that my wife Akie and Madam First Lady had a chance to try Japanese calligraphy. Each wrote one Chinese character, or kanji: "hei" by Madam First Lady, which means being smooth and calm; and "wa" by my wife Akie, which stands for harmony. And when combined, that these two letters literally mean "peace." And I think their wonderful joint work represents our alliance very nicely. Under our alliance, Japan and the United States work hand in hand to contribute to regional and global peace.

For 2 days, President Trump and I spent many, many hours together, and had an in-depth discussion on various global challenges. And I'm particularly grateful for President Trump and Madam First Lady, who kindly spend their time with a former abductee and the family members of those who had been abducted by North Korea.

And it's been only 1 year since I first saw President Trump in New York City. And looking back the—over the half-century history of Japan-U.S. alliance, we've never seen two leaders of Japan and the United States forging as close relationship as ours and as strong bond in ours in just 1 year.

Of course, I'm very proud of my relationship with President Trump, but we are not the only ones who have supported this invaluable friendship between Japan and the United States. And on

this occasion, I would like to acknowledge tremendous efforts by leaders from various fields, including political, business, and cultural leaders who are here today.

In honor of such contribution to our invaluable friendship, I invited so many distinguished guests who have been making every effort to deepen our friendship. And I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and also ask for further support for the development of our bilateral relationship.

Last but not least, let me share with you my honest impression about President Trump's visit to Japan this time. As I said, this was the very first visit by President Trump, and it was indeed a historic visit. And I do hope that you will enjoy your last night in Tokyo as you wish. And also, I sincerely hope that you will have a really successful trip to Asia this time, which started here in Japan.

So with that, I now would like to propose a toast wishing all the best to President Trump and Madam First Lady, and also wishing for the further development of the friendship between Japan and the United States.

Cheers!

[At this point, Prime Minister Abe offered a toast.]

Moderator. Thank you very much, Prime Minister Abe. Now may I invite President Trump to give remarks.

President Trump. Prime Minister and Mrs. Abe, this has been a really wonderful 2 days. We have to spend more time together, because I have enjoyed every minute of it, even though he's a very, very tough negotiator. And, Melania, a real friend of yours now is Mrs. Abe. And I know you enjoyed it with me. You enjoyed it in Florida, and you enjoyed it here, and maybe even more so. But I want to thank you for the royal welcome.

And it was really a—very much a working holiday, even on the golf course. So we can call it a couple of days off, but it wasn't. It was full work. Even as we played golf, all we did was talk about different things. *[Laughter]* We'd better not go into it. But I have to tell you, we did, and we made a lot of progress on a lot of fronts.

I do want to congratulate Mr. Aoki. He was one of the great putters, probably still is. They say you never lose your putting. When you're a great putter, you never lose your putting. But I remember a specific tournament, believe it or not, because it was one of the best I ever saw. It was the greatest putting display that I ever saw. It was you and Jack Nicklaus. Was that the U.S. Open? U.S. Open. And you would get up and sink a 30-footer. He'd get up and sink a 25-footer. And this went on for the whole back nine. And then, ultimately, Jack won by one stroke. But that was one of the greatest putting displays anybody has ever seen and there ever was. And I even know your putting stroke, very flat.

And I spoke yesterday with the great Matsuyama, who is doing great, right? He's going to be a big star, and he's going to be great. I don't even know if he's with us tonight. I don't think he's with us tonight. But he does want to get together in New York, and we're going to get together. And even though I want to have a great interpreter, but he's rapidly learning the language.

But I will tell you that it's an honor to be with you, because everyone in the world of golf talks about that one great afternoon. Just putt after putt, and it was really great. So congratulations. Great gentleman, great gentleman.

So my relationship with Shinzo got off to a quite a rocky start, because I never ran for office, and here I am. But I never ran, so I wasn't very experienced. And after I had won, everybody was calling me from all over the world. I never knew we had so many countries. *[Laughter]*

So I was now President-elect. But I didn't know you were supposed to not see world leaders until after you were in office, which was January 20. So you were just not supposed to, because it was considered bad form. It was not a nice thing to do, and I understand that from the standpoint of the President whose place you were taking. Okay?

[The interpreter translated President Trump's remarks.]

So you can only take so many calls from world leaders, because, you know, everybody was calling. But Japan, you take. And some others: We took Germany, we took Russia, we took China, we took your Prime Minister. Go ahead.

[The interpreter continued his translation.]

So it's November, and he said to me: "Congratulations on your victory, it was a great victory, I would like to see you. I would like to see you as soon as possible." And I said, "Anytime you want, just come on in, don't worry about it." But I was referring to after January 20. *[Laughter]* So I said, don't worry about it. Anytime you want, I look forward to seeing you. Just give us a call, no problem, anytime you want. And all of the sudden, I get a call from, actually, Japan press. And they said that our Prime Minister is going to New York to meet with the President-elect.

So the press is going crazy because the Prime Minister of Japan is coming to see me. I think it's absolutely fine, but I didn't really mean now. I meant some time in February, March, or April. *[Laughter]* Meaning, you have a very aggressive—very, very aggressive, strong, tough Prime Minister. That's a good thing, by the way, not a bad thing. *[Laughter]*

So then, the New York media started calling me, and I was getting all sorts of signals from Hope and Sarah, in a different position, and everybody. And they're going crazy. They're saying: "You cannot see him. It's so inappropriate. It looks bad." I say, "What's wrong?" They said: "It's a bad thing to see him. You have to wait until after, in all fairness, Barack Obama leaves office." And I said, "What do I do?" And they said, "Let's call."

So I called him, and he wasn't there. He was on the airplane flying to New York. *[Laughter]* And I said: "You know what? There's no way he's going to land and I'm not seeing him." So I saw him, and it worked out just fine. Do you agree with that? *[Laughter]* And he actually brought me the most beautiful golf club I've ever seen. It was a driver that's totally gold. Right? It's gold. *[Laughter]* And I looked at it, I said, "If I ever use this driver—me—to use that driver at a golf club, I will be laughed off every course I ever go onto." But it is the most beautiful weapon I've ever seen, so I thank you for that.

But we had a great meeting. It lasted forever. It was a very long meeting in Trump Tower. And for some reason, from that moment on, we had a really—and developed a really great relationship. And here we are today and better than ever, and we're going to work together. And it's going to get more and more special, and we're going to work out problems of Japan and problems of the United States. And it's going to be something very, very special for both countries.

And I just want to finish by saying that Melania and I today visited the palace. This is a beautiful, beautiful place. And we met two very beautiful people, the Imperial Majesties, the Emperor and the Empress, and spent a long time talking to them today. And there was a lot of love in that room for all of you people—I can tell you—from everyone from Japan. They love the people of Japan, they love this country dearly, and they have great, great respect for your Prime Minister. And they truly think that your Prime Minister did very, very well when he decided to marry—or she decided to marry him, Mrs. Abe. But they have great, great respect, I can tell you that.

And I just want to conclude by saying that our two great countries will have incredible friendship and incredible success for many centuries to come, not years, not decades, but for many centuries to come. And again, it's an honor to have you as my good friend, and I just want to thank you and Mrs. Abe. This is a very, very special 2 days. We will not forget, and we will be back soon. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

[President Trump offered a toast.]

NOTE: The President spoke at approximately 7:40 p.m. at the Akasaka Palace. In his remarks, he referred to White House Communications Director Hope C. Hicks; Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders; and Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan. Prime Minister Abe referred to Hitomi Soga, a Japanese citizen who was abducted by North Korean authorities in 1978. Prime Minister Abe and the moderator spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

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