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President Bush congratulated the Philippines on its nomination by Asian countries to join the United Nations Security Council and expressed confidence that the Philippines would contribute to global peace and security.

President Bush and President Macapagal-Arroyo concluded the visit by celebrating the impressive gains made in Philippine-U.S. relations under their administrations, expressing confidence that today's State visit marks another concrete step forward in the development of a modern, mature relationship between friends and equals.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Remarks at a State Dinner Hosted by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo in Manila

October 18, 2003

The President. Thank you very much, Madam President and Attorney Arroyo, for your gracious hospitality. Laura and I are really grateful for your warm words of welcome. We also appreciate the distinction you have bestowed upon us this evening, the Order of the Sikatuna and the Order of Gabriela Silang. We are honored to accept them on behalf of the American people.

I represent the oldest democracy in the Americas. And I'm proud to pay tribute to the oldest democracy in Asia. The friendship between our countries is strong and warm and enduring, and we reaffirm that partnership here tonight.

Today I was the first United States President since Dwight Eisenhower to address a Joint Session of your Congress. In 1960, President Eisenhower expressed America's firm support for a fledgling democracy. Two generations later, I am pleased to show my country's support for the great democracy you have become.

The Philippines and the United States are linked by shared values, by shared history, and by a shared commitment to the defense of liberty. Only a few miles from this palace are the graves of 17,000 Americans who fought for freedom in the Pacific. Their lasting legacy and the legacy of the Filipinos who fought with them is a free and democratic Philippine nation.

Today, free nations are tested once again. Once again, we face determined enemies of freedom, the terrorists and their allies. Once again, we are depending on one another in an hour of need. Once again, we are relying on the strength of the great alliance between our two countries. Once again, we will prevail.

Madam President, I thank you for your friendship and counsel, for your courage and perseverance. And I offer this toast to you, to the great nation of the Philippines, and to the lasting friendship between our two peoples.

[*At this point, the President offered a toast.*]

The President. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:45 p.m. at Malacanang Palace. In his remarks, he referred to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of the Philippines, and her husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo.

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat of Thailand and an Exchange With Reporters in Bangkok, Thailand
October 19, 2003

President Bush. Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much for your grand hospitality. Our entire delegation is honored that you have worked so hard to make our stay comfortable and meaningful.

We just had a very good bilateral with our very close friend. I want to thank the Prime Minister for his strong support in the war on terror and remind our fellow citizens that because of his Government and his good work, Mr. Hambali, one of the masterminds of the Bali bombing, has been brought to justice. Mr. Prime Minister, the world is safer because of that. And I want to thank you, and I want to thank you for your support in Iraq.

I told the Prime Minister that this country is willing to grant major non-NATO ally status to Thailand, which is a very important recognition of your friendship and your strong support. As well we discussed the fact that we want to move forward the free trade agreement. We have the intention to begin negotiations on our free trade agreement, which is a very important step in our bilateral relations. And I want to thank you for that.

We also talked about a wide range of issues, including Burma and our deep desire for freedom to take place in Burma. We care deeply about Aung San Suu Kyi and the status of Aung San Suu Kyi, and we would like to see her free. I appreciate the sympathetic hearing I got from the Prime Minister. We share the same goal; the Government assured us of that, and I thank him for that.

All in all, it was very constructive visit, perhaps made more constructive by the fact that the Prime Minister went to university at Sam Houston State in Huntsville, Texas—[*laughter*]—and therefore, we speak the same language. [*Laughter*]

Thank you, sir, for your hospitality.

I thought I'd take a couple of questions.

North Korea

Q. Mr. President, would you be willing to offer North Korea some kind of non-invasion or non-aggression agreement or pact, maybe something short of a treaty, if it would get out of the nuclear weapons business?

President Bush. Well, that's exactly what I'm going to talk to the leader of China about here in a couple of hours, how to move the process forward. I've said as plainly as I can say that we have no intention of invading North Korea. And I've also said as plainly as I can say that we expect North Korea to get rid of her nuclear weapons ambitions. And the progress we're making on this issue is that we've convinced other nations to say the same thing, including China and Japan and South Korea and Russia—and Thailand. The Foreign Minister recently has had a trip there, and briefed us on his discussions with the North Korean Government.

We would like to see the Korean Peninsula without any nuclear weapons. And we will also be willing to discuss with the Chinese and our other partners how to move the process forward. That's precisely what I'm going to do.

Holland [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Usama bin Laden Tape/War on Terror

Q. Sir, bin Laden is threatening new attacks. How serious a threat is this, and will this discourage other countries from stepping forward in Iraq?

President Bush. I think that the bin Laden tape should say to everybody the war on terror goes on, that there's still a danger for free nations and that free nations need to work together more than ever to share intelligence, cut off money, and