

Remarks Following Discussions With President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan April 28, 2006

President Bush. Mr. President, welcome. We've just had a really interesting visit. And we talked about the need to—for the world to see a modern Muslim country that is able to provide for its citizens, that understands that democracy is the wave of the future. And I appreciate your leadership, Mr. President.

We, obviously, talked about Iran. I assured the President of my desire to solve this problem diplomatically and peacefully. I appreciate so very much the Government's contribution of support in troops to the new democracy in Iraq. I spent time describing to the President a meeting I had today via video conference with our Ambassador and General Casey—very important for me to bring our ally up to date on the progress that's being made on the ground there. I shared with him my hope that the national unity Government will help achieve the objective we all want, which is peace and democracy.

And we, of course, talked about energy. And I appreciate the vision of the Government and the vision of the President in helping this world achieve what we all want, which is energy security. Azerbaijan has got a very important role to play. And we discussed internal politics, and we discussed politics of the neighborhood as well, particularly relations with Armenia.

I appreciate very much the candid discussion. I thank you for sharing your thoughts with me, and thank you for our alliance. And welcome.

President Aliyev. Thank you very much, Mr. President. I am very grateful for the invitation. I'm very glad to be in Washington and have an opportunity to discuss with you the issues of bilateral relations. I'm sure that our relations of strategic partnership will strengthen in the future.

We covered all the aspects of our bilateral relations. We are very grateful for the

leadership of the United States in promotion of the energy security issues in the region, in assisting us to create a solid transportation infrastructure which will allow to develop a full-scale Caspian oil and gas reserves and to deliver them to the international markets.

We are allies in the war on terror. We've been, from the very first day, shoulder to shoulder with the United States in the peacekeeping operations in various parts of the world, and will continue to contribute to the creation of peace and stability in the region.

Of course, the issues of resolution of Armenia and Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh are also in the center of our discussions. And we—I informed Mr. President with the latest status of the negotiations and expressed my hope that a peaceful settlement of the conflict will happen and will serve to the peace and stability in the whole region.

In general, I'd like to say that I'm very satisfied with my visit, and I consider this as instrumental in the future development of Azerbaijan as a modern, secular, democratic country. We share the same values. We are grateful for United States assistance in promotion of political process, process of democratization of our society, and very committed to continue this cooperation in the future.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

President Bush. One final word I forgot to mention. I do want to congratulate the President and the First Lady on the marriage of their daughter this weekend. It's a major sacrifice for the President to be here during the planning phases of the wedding. And we wish you and the First Lady all the best, and more importantly, we wish your daughter all the best.

President Aliyev. Thank you, Mr. President.

President Bush. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:49 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to U.S. Ambassador to

Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; and President Aliyev's wife, Mehriban Aliyeva, and daughter, Leyla Aliyeva.

Remarks Following a Meeting With North Korean Defectors and Family Members of Japanese Abducted by North Korea *April 28, 2006*

I have just had one of the most moving meetings since I've been the President, here in the Oval Office. I met with a mom and a brother who long to be reunited with her daughter and his sister. They're apart because the North Korean Government abducted the child when she was a teenager. And all the mom wants is to be reunited with her daughter.

It is hard to believe that a country would foster abduction. It's hard for Americans to imagine that a leader of any country would encourage the abduction of a young child. It's a heartless country that would separate loved ones, and yet that's exactly what happened to this mom as a result of the actions of North Korea. If North Korea expects to be respected in the world, that country must respect human rights and human dignity and must allow this mother to hug her child again.

I talked to a family, a young North Korean family that escaped the clutches of tyranny in order to live in freedom. This young couple was about to have a child, and the mom was 5 months pregnant when they crossed the river to get into China. They wandered in China, wondering whether or not their child could grow up and have a decent life. They were deeply concerned about the future of their child; any mother and father would be concerned about their child.

They had to wander because they did not want to have their child grow up in a society that was brutal, a society that did

not respect the human condition. By the grace of God, they found safe haven. Their child was born and now safely sits here in the Oval Office.

I talked to a courageous man who escaped from North Korea. He was in the North Korean military. He saw firsthand the brutal nature of the regime, and he couldn't—his heart could no longer take it. He followed his conscience and escaped. He speaks for thousands who have escaped North Korea and thousands who live inside the country; he speaks eloquently about the need for their freedom and for them to be treated decently.

The world requires courage to confront people who do not respect human rights, and it has been my honor to welcome into the Oval Office people of enormous courage: a mom; a mother and dad of a young child; a former soldier; a brother. And so I welcome you here. We're proud you're here. I assure you that the United States of America strongly respects human rights. We strongly will work for freedom so that the people of North Korea can raise their children in a world that's free and hopeful and so that moms will never again have to worry about an abducted daughter.

May God bless you all. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:39 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Sakie Yokota, mother, and Takuya Yokota, brother, of Megumi