

The President. So I thank you for your service. I thank you for your sacrifice. And as I leave this peninsula for probably my last time as your President, I go with confidence in our mission, confidence in our country, and with great gratitude in my heart for everyone who wears our Nation's uniform.

Thank you for what you're doing. May God bless you. May God bless the people here. And may God continue to bless the United States of America. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:48 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Cpl. Victor L. Berlus, USA, 8th Army, who introduced the President; Gen. Walter L. "Skip" Sharp, USA, commander, U.S. Forces Korea, and his wife Joanne; Gen. Lee Sung-chool, South Korean Army, deputy commander, Combined Forces Command, and his wife Park Jung-shin; and Command Sgt. Maj. Robert A. Winzenried, USA, U.S. Forces Korea.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej of Thailand in Bangkok, Thailand *August 6, 2008*

Prime Minister Samak. We are pleased to welcome President Bush visit to Thailand on the auspicious occasion of the celebration of 155th—75th anniversary of Thai-U.S. relations. As Thailand has now assumed the ASEAN chairmanship, we will use the opportunity to strengthen our engagement and cooperation with the U.S., both bilaterally and through ASEAN.

President Bush and I had just a very good discussion on several issues of common interest. We discussed the strengthen of the close military and the security cooperation, which benefit both country and the region. A case of—in point is our military close partnership during the tsunami and post-Cyclone Nargis to facilitate access of American relief and assistance to the affected countries.

We will continue our discussion on the other regional issues over the dinner this evening. President Bush expressed his appreciation for Thailand's humanitarian role in sheltering displaced persons from neighboring countries for over 30 years. I also thanked the President for the United States understanding on the Preah Vihear issue.

We agreed to enhance the Thai-U.S. relation by focusing on education, public health, sciences, security, and the law enforcement cooperation. Our two countries share the long and special connection. President Bush—former President Bush senior and Mrs. Barbara Bush came to Thailand to pay tribute to His Majesty the King on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of accession to the throne in December 2006.

Looking towards the future, we agreed that our alliance and friendship will remain firm and close as have been in the past 144—174 years. We are determined to continue working closely together to further strengthen our relationship and good will for the benefit of our two countries and the region.

President Bush. Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister. *Sawatdee khrap.* [Laughter] Thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for welcoming Laura and me and our daughter Barbara to your beautiful country. I want to thank you very much for welcoming us on behalf of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen. We appreciate the opportunity to come back, and we honor the

friendship that has been in existence for 175 years.

I want to thank you very much for being such a strong ally in the war against terror. Our nations are strengthening our security and defense cooperation. Thailand continues to host Cobra Gold, which is one of the largest annual multilateral training exercises in Southeast Asia.

Thailand's troops have helped the people of Iraq and Afghanistan as they battle extremists and strengthen their democracy, and I want to thank you for those contributions, Mr. Prime Minister. America and Thailand are coordinating our law enforcement, counterterrorism, and counterproliferation activities so we can do a better job of protecting our citizens from danger.

The United States and Thailand are working to expand freedom with good governance. I want to thank you very much and congratulate the people of Thailand for restoring its democracy. Through the Asia Pacific Democracy Partnership, our nations are working together to strengthen democratic values and institutions throughout the region. As the chair of ASEAN, we support your efforts to reduce trade barriers and to expand economic opportunity and help Southeast Asia grow in hope.

The United States and Thailand work together to fight disease. I don't think our citizens understand this, Mr. Prime Minister, but we've dedicated \$35 million to help prevent and treat HIV/AIDS here in Thailand, and we're happy to do so. I'm looking forward to going tomorrow to the clinic where we get to see the efforts of the initiative. It's called the Mercy Centre, and I appreciate you arranging that, for me to go see, Mr. Prime Minister.

We're also working on avian flu. I think it's very important for our nations to prepare for the worst. Obviously, we're hoping for the best. And so we've got a good, strong initiative on avian flu.

We're working together to help the people of Burma. We responded very quickly when Burma was struck by the terrible cyclone, and I want to thank you very much for your leadership on that issue. After all, yours was the place where much of the world aid came to be distributed to the poor people there that were deeply affected by the storm.

We want to see prosperity and freedom restored to Burma. Tomorrow Laura is going to the Thai-Burmese border to visit a resettlement camp where Burmese refugees are receiving health care and humanitarian aid. She's looking forward to the trip, and I'm looking forward to hearing her report from the trip.

So, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you very much for your hospitality. I want to thank you for feeding my delegation. We're looking forward to eating some good Thai food, which is very famous throughout the world. Please give my very best regards to His Majesty and Her Majesty.

Prime Minister Samak. I will.

President Bush. And thank you very much for being so gracious.

Prime Minister Samak. All right. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 7:51 p.m. at the Government House. In his remarks, the President referred to King Phumiphon Adunyadet and Queen Sirikit of Thailand.

Remarks in Bangkok August 7, 2008

Thank you. *Sawatdee khrap*. Thank you for the warm welcome. Laura and I are delighted to be back in Bangkok. Such a beautiful city, full of gracious and hospitable people. We appreciate the warm welcome extended by His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen.

I realize I'm a few days ahead of time, but I do wish Her Majesty a happy birthday. Above all, I bring America's warmest wishes to our oldest allies in Asia, the people of Thailand.

Our friendship began 175 years ago this spring, when President Andrew Jackson dispatched an envoy to Siam. Negotiations soon concluded a treaty of peace and commerce and sealed it, curiously enough, with a lotus flower on one side and an eagle and stars on the other. Generations of close friendship followed. At one point, the Thai King offered to send elephants to America. [Laughter] President Abraham Lincoln politely declined. [Laughter] Yes, I was wondering whether or not we can kind of get the offer back on the table. [Laughter] Although my ranch isn't big enough, probably, to hold the elephants. [Laughter]

The values of freedom and openness that gave birth to our alliance have sustained it through the centuries. American troops and Royal Thai Armed Forces have stood united from Korea and Vietnam to Afghanistan and Iraq. Our free market economies have surged forward on a rising tide of trade and investment. Tourism has boomed as more people have discovered this beautiful and ancient land. And some 200,000 Thai Americans now enrich my nation with their enterprise and their culture and their faith.

On this historic anniversary of our alliance, America looks to Thailand as a leader in the region and a partner around the world. I was proud to designate Thailand a major non-NATO ally of the United

States. I salute the Thai people on the restoration of democracy, which has proved that liberty and law reign here in the "land of the free." In many ways, the story of Thailand is the story of this region. Over the past six decades, Asia has gone from an area mired in poverty and recovering from world war to a thriving and dynamic region. America has played a role in this transformation. By maintaining a stabilizing military presence, we helped to—we helped free emerging nations to grow without concerns about their security. By pursuing strong diplomatic engagement, we helped once-hostile nations resolve their differences in peace. By opening our markets to Asian exports, we helped powerful economies to take shape.

I'm proud of these contributions. Yet the primary source of this region's success is the people. From South Korea to Singapore, nations pursued economic policies based upon free enterprise, free trade, and the rule of law. And the results have astounded the world. Last year, trade in goods between the United States and this side of the Pacific reached \$1 trillion. And there's striking change from the pattern of centuries: More trade now crosses the Pacific than the Atlantic.

With the rise of economic freedom has come a dramatic expansion of political liberty. Think about this: After World War II, Australia and New Zealand were the region's only democracies. Today, the majority of Asian nations answer to their citizens. With this shift, the people of this region have defied the skeptics who claimed that Asian values were incompatible with liberty. Free societies emerged in largely Buddhist Thailand, largely Hindu India, largely Muslim Indonesia, largely Shinto Japan, and the largely Christian Philippines. As freedom has taken root,