

President Bush commended President Macapagal-Arroyo for her steadfast leadership in pursuing economic reforms in the Philippines and welcomed her pledge to maintain resolve in pursuing reforms in revenue collection, energy privatization and intellectual property rights protection.

President Bush praised President Macapagal-Arroyo's determination to alleviate poverty and other socio-economic grievances that are too often exploited by terrorist organizations to recruit followers. President Arroyo welcomed the new, six year U.S. initiative to strengthen education in the poorest areas of the Philippines, particularly Mindanao, as supportive of her efforts. This new program complements the Philippine government's efforts to uplift the communities in the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and expand their access to education and training.

The two Presidents discussed the Philippine government's efforts to establish a durable, effective peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). They expressed appreciation for Malaysia's role in facilitating the negotiating process. President Bush emphasized U.S. willingness to provide diplomatic and financial assistance in support of peace but emphasized that the MILF must first fully renounce terror and demonstrate its commitment to peaceful political negotiations.

Presidents Bush and Macapagal-Arroyo discussed the situation in Iraq. The two leaders reiterated their shared commitment to a free Iraq at peace with its neighbors and expressed unwavering determination to continue the important work of helping the Iraqi people build a stable, just and prosperous country that poses no threat to the world. President Bush thanked President Macapagal-Arroyo for the contributions made by the Philippines to security and reconstruction in Iraq. The two Presidents affirmed the vital role of the United Nations in postwar Iraq and stressed the need for more countries to contribute peacekeeping and humanitarian contingents to Iraq as that country prepares for sovereignty under a democratic regime.

The two leaders welcomed the six party talks in Beijing and reiterated their intention

to work with other members of the Asia Pacific region to ensure the complete, verifiable and irreversible elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

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 sta-

tus 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.