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President Hu about, for example, my personal faith and the belief that people should be allowed to worship freely. And a vibrant, whole society is one that recognizes that certain freedoms are inherent and need to be part of a complete society. And he's made some very positive statements and interesting statements about different aspects of freedom.

So this is a vital relationship. China is a vast, significant, growing economy that is—using more and more energy. And here is an area where all of us can work together, and that is on how to share technologies and use technologies in such a way that we become less dependent on hydrocarbons. Certainly, Japan has an interest in this in that she imports a lot of hydrocarbons. South Korean Peninsula, same thing—or South Korea, same thing—and China. The United States uses a lot of hydrocarbons, and it's in our interest that we develop technologies so that we use less. It's in China's interest as well. So energy cooperation, the idea of discussing how to best move forward and to share technologies makes a lot of sense for our respective people and the world for that matter.

And so it's a—we've got great opportunities to work together. I'm really looking forward to going to the three countries represented here. Every time I go out to the Far East I come back appreciative of the notion of hard work and entrepreneurship and culture. So I'm looking forward to the trip. It's going to be—it'll be an important trip.

Thank you all for your time. Very good questions, appreciate it. Thank you, all.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 10:30 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan; President Hu Jintao and former President Jiang Zemin of China; President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea; Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea; and President Nambaryn Enkhbayar of Mongolia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Japan's NHK Television

November 8, 2005

Japan-U.S. Relations

Yoshio Nishikawa. Thank you very much. My question is on U.S.-Japan alliance coming up to your meeting with Prime Minister Koizumi next week. How would you define its significance?

The President. First, I would define the relationship as a close relationship. I think people who follow my statements here in America about foreign policy know that I admire Prime Minister Koizumi a lot and consider him a close friend. And that's an important part of having good relations.

Secondly, the relationship between Japan and the United States is an important relationship. It is important for peace, and it's important for prosperity. We're significant trading partners, and the more we trade together in a fair way, the more it's likely that there will be prosperity. And we're working together to maintain the peace. And I appreciate very much the Japanese commitment to democracy and freedom around the world.

Japan's Role in Iraq

Mr. Nishikawa. Especially the deployment of the Japanese Self-Defense Force in Iraq is, I think, a symbol of U.S.-Japan relationship. And will you be urging Prime Minister Koizumi to prolong its deployment period as the mandate expires next month?

The President. Well, I'm aware the mandate does expire. First, I do want to thank the Government and the people of Japan for supporting the democratic aspirations of the people of Iraq. That's noble, and it's important for spreading peace, because democracies don't fight. After all, look at the relationship between the United States and Japan: We're democracies, and we coexist peacefully, and we work together to keep the peace.

Secondly, I will—I think what's important is that we get past these elections in Iraq, and then coalition allies can discuss with a new Iraqi Government how to proceed forward. I have always said that as the Iraqis stand up—in other words, as the Iraqis get

more trained to secure the peace, then coalition forces and the U.S. forces will stand down.

Security and Defense Cooperation

Mr. Nishikawa. So would we allow to return to the alliance again, and in the recent two-plus-two meeting, there was important agreement for increasing cooperation on security and on defense front, such as the showing of base facilities. But within Japan there is a concern that Japan might be engulfed by the international—the United States' international strategy, and how would you respond to this concern?

The President. Well, first of all, Japan makes the decisions that the Government thinks is necessary. Japan is, of course, a sovereign nation. And we work closely to work out our defense posture in concert with what's in the best interests of not only America but with Japan.

Secondly, as you know, we've worked very closely on an arrangement to realign troops on Okinawa. That's what allies and friends do; they work through difficult problems in a way that satisfies the needs of both parties as well as what is good for regional stability, and that we would always consult with our friends, the Japanese. We would never put them in a position that ran contrary to their national interests.

China-Japan Relations

Mr. Nishikawa. Then I'd like to move on. Regional issues?

The President. Sure.

Mr. Nishikawa. First, China, which is growing dramatically——

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Nishikawa. ——in economics and military power. I see in many aspects Japan and the United States is cooperating. But Japanese relationship with China is aggravating because of Prime Minister's visit to Yasukuni Shrine. How—what do you—how do you view this visit?

The President. Well, first of all, I think the relationship between China and Japan is more complicated than just a visit to a shrine. In other words, there's a lot of Japanese capital investing in China, which is one indication of the relationship, and of course, there's the political side, which I understand is strained right now.

And so it seems like a proper role for me is to remind our friends in the region that it takes work to overcome the past. But overcoming the past is going to be necessary to have a bright future. I remind people that the United States and Japan were sworn enemies at one time. And we worked—we've worked to overcome that, and now we're close allies. And the same is possible with other countries in the region, between Japan and those affected by World War II.

Mr. Nishikawa. And do you intend to address what you told me in your meeting with the Prime Minister?

The President. Well, if he wants to talk about it, I'd be glad to talk about it. But what's interesting about this interview is I just addressed the issue, so he probably will hear this. But the Prime Minister is a savvy man, and he is a smart man. And he knows very well that it requires work to get past old grievances. And he's—I think—I find him to be a very skilled diplomat as well.

Mr. Nishikawa. And with regards to North Korea, Japan is continuously working for a long-desired solution to Japanese abductees.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Nishikawa. And so how does the United States aim to support Japan on this issue?

The President. Well, of course, we abhor abductions. And we can understand the heartbreak of the Japanese families that—who lost a loved one, and therefore support Japan in its desire to resolve this issue. However, the main focus of our discussions—our six-party talks is to make sure that the Korean Peninsula does not have a nuclear weapon. And that's in Japan's interest as well as in the interest of the United States and, for that matter, everybody else in the region, that we succeed in these talks to get—make sure that the North Koreans hear with one voice, a voice spoken by China, South Korea, Japan, the United States, and Russia, that it is in the interest of world peace and harmony that all—that North Korea and South Korea, for that matter, does not have a nuclear weapon.

Beef Exports to Japan

Mr. Nishikawa. Lastly, it has been 2 years since Japan has banned imports of beef.

The President. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Nishikawa. What do you expect?

The President. Well, I understand this is a very—that the—this is a difficult issue. I'm also pleased to see that the Food Safety Commission—I think that's what it's called——

Mr. Nishikawa. Yes.

The President. ——has ruled that U.S. beef is safe. Of course, our cattlemen here believe the beef is safe. I'm more than willing to eat U.S. beef, and do—eat a lot of it. And my point is, is that I hope that the Government follows through with the recommendations of the safety commission—or just decides about opening the market and listens to the safety commission, because we feel like not only our beef is safe, but it's an important part of our cattle industry to be able to sell to the Japanese consumer.

Mr. Nishikawa. So I thank you again, Mr. President——

The President. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Nishikawa. ——for giving us such a kind opportunity to interview you.

The President. Well, thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:18 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi of Japan. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With the Korean Broadcasting System

November 8, 2005

Six-Party Talks

Kwang Chool Lee. Mr. President, thank you for granting this interview with KBS, Korean Broadcasting System. Mr. President, today a new round in the six-party talks starts in Beijing. Do you have any deadline for progress in the talks and for North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program?

The President. I guess I would define my feelings this way: I think the world is watching very carefully whether or not we—that's six countries—are able to achieve a noble and peaceful objective, which is a Korean Peninsula which does not have any nuclear weapons.

And thus far, there has been some progress, but it's been mainly talk. And my hope, of course, is that we begin to see action, results. And those results, of course, would be that there would be a verifiable dismantling of nuclear weapons and the programs required to make nuclear weapons. We will continue to work with the parties to move the process beyond rhetoric to reality.

Yasukuni Shrine

Mr. Lee. But recently the relations amongst China, Japan, and Korea are antagonized by Mr. Koizumi's visit to Yasukuni Shrine, which honors World War II criminals. Mr. President, don't you think this is an unnecessary provocation to other Asian countries tortured by these war criminals?

The President. I am aware of the friction caused by the Prime Minister of Japan's decision. I believe a useful role for me, as someone who is friendly with the three leaders involved, is to remind people that it is best to put the past behind and move forward in the future. And I understand the sentiments of the South Korean people; they're still angry about the past. And so there's a natural reaction, when they view a decision made by the Prime Minister.

I'm hopeful that people will be able to see what happened between U.S. and Japanese relations. We're close, like we're close with South Korea, and yet my dad, for example, was a fighter—a Navy fighter against the Japanese. In other words, with hard work, we can get the past behind us, and that would be my hope when I discuss this issue with the respective leaders.

South Korea-U.S. Relations

Mr. Lee. Mr. President, recently many Koreans and Americans have become anxious about the relations between our two countries. What are your expectations of Korea in this changing relations, and what does U.S. offer to Korea in this changed environment?