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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?

The President. Well, I appreciate that question. Look, I think that relations are better than some people want to say they are. As a matter of fact, I know relations between our Governments is good. We've done some—we've made some difficult decisions together and have acted together. For example, troops in Iraq—that was difficult. That was a difficult decision for your President. It was a difficult decision for me, as a matter of fact, to commit troops. And yet, we're working together to bring democracy, and therefore peace, to a troubled part of the world.

We had a base realignment issue that we worked out with the South Korean Government. That's not an easy issue, but it's a necessary issue that the Government—South Korean Government thought was necessary and I agreed was necessary. And we did so in a cordial way.

We've got a lot of trade. I mean, the trade between South Korea and the United States is substantial. There is an opportunity down the road for us to put a free trade agreement in. Both countries are going to have to work hard to make that happen. There's a lot of exchange of people back and forth between our countries.

So there's a lot of contact, a lot of commerce, and a lot of security measures we're taking together. I think the thing to do is to keep advancing the relationship and working to make it more mature so that we can work together to keep the peace.

Mr. Lee. Mr. President, you mentioned free trade. And on your recent trip to South America, you stressed the importance of free trade. Will the FTA be on the main agenda when you visit Korea?

The President. Oh, I think—I'm not sure what you mean by "main agenda," but it's certainly going to be an item we discuss. And you know, these agreements are important, but so is a more global agreement, called the Doha round of the WTO. And of course, I'll be discussing that as well, not only with President Roh but at the APEC meeting that South Korea is so kindly hosting.

Mr. Lee. Thank you, Mr. President, for sharing your views.

The President. Well, thank you very much. I'm looking forward to going back to your beautiful country. And I want to thank the Government of South Korea and the people of South Korea for hosting me and Laura as we return.

Mr. Lee. Thank you, sir.

The President. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:27 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; and President Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Phoenix Television of Hong Kong

November 8, 2005

China-U.S. Relations

Naichain Mo. Mr. President, thank you for selecting Phoenix Television for this interview. What greeting and message would you like to convey to the Chinese people prior to your visit to China?

The President. First, that the relationship between China and America is an important relationship. It's a mixed relationship. There is a lot of good that we're doing together, and there's a lot of areas where we may not have full agreement but, nevertheless, are able to discuss our disagreements in a very cordial way. And so I would tell the people of China you live in a great, massive country that's growing well and that we want to have good relations with you.

President's Upcoming Visit to China

Ms. Mo. This will be your third formal visit to China.

The President. Yes.

Ms. Mo. What do you hope to achieve with this visit?

The President. Well, first of all, the visit is giving me a chance to further get to know the leadership. President Hu is a person who I enjoy visiting with. He is a smart fellow. And the more you get to know a person, the better—the easier it is to make good policy.

Secondly, I'm going to, of course, be going to China to represent the interests of my people. I'll talk about the need for trade that is free and fair. I'll talk about the currency,