AUTHENTICATED
U.S. GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION
GPO

The President. You made some news today.

Mr. Yun. Yes. Thank you very much for the news.

The President. Yes, absolutely.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:15 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea; and Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 31. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Suthichai Sae-Yoon, the Nation Multimedia Group, Thailand

July 30, 2008

President's Trip to Asia

Mr. Suthichai. You plan to deliver a major speech in Bangkok on Asia. Is that your farewell speech? What will be the main theme, sir?

The President. A farewell speech will occur shortly before the next President is sworn in. This will be probably my last speech in the Far East.

President's Trip to Asia/U.S Foreign Policy

Mr. Suthichai. What is the main theme?

The President. The main theme is that the United States of America has got strategic interests in the Far East. This administration has worked hard to make sure we have good relations with all the countries of the Far East; that there are opportunities to work together to solve problems; there will be moments—and it's—the United States must stay engaged. I will talk about accomplishments; I'll talk about challenges. And I'm looking forward to giving it. It's interesting that I'm giving a speech about the whole Far East in Thailand.

Mr. Suthichai. Right. Why Thailand?

The President. Well, because it's—first of all, the assumption is that when you give a comprehensive speech in the Far East, it would be in, you know, China or Japan or, you know—and Thailand is, one, a long-time friend; two, is an important part of ASEAN. In other words, there's—the Far East is more than just the countries that dominate the news. And so, therefore, if you're going to give a comprehensive speech, you give it in a country that makes it—just by the sight alone, indicates how comprehensive the policy must be. In other words, you can't ignore other countries if you focus only on a few.

Thailand-U.S. Relations

Mr. Suthichai. Right. You are also joining the celebration of 175 years——

The President. One hundred and seventy-five years.

Mr. Suthichai. ——of Thai-U.S. relations. At this juncture in history, why is Thailand still important to the United States?

The President. Common values, close friends. Hopefully, Thailand views us a reliable ally; we certainly view Thailand as a reliable ally. And, you know, it's just—175 years is a long time.

Mr. Suthichai. That's right—always had been close related in all major challenges.

The President. Absolutely.

Thailand

Mr. Suthichai. Vietnam War——

The President. Very much so. The Thai people were just fabulous and always have been. And it's a great country, and it's a beautiful country with a great history and tradition, and I'm looking to going again.

Democracy in Thailand

Mr. Suthichai. What would be the single most important pillar in Thai-American relations, if you can cite one?

The President. Democracy; and obviously we're pleased that democracy is still very much alive and well in Thailand. And I think democracy is the pillar, and the Government's respect for human rights and human dignity and individualism.

Human Rights Activists

Mr. Suthichai. I understand that you are meeting some Burmese dissidents too.

The President. I am. Of course, I am. I will, as is my wife.

Mr. Suthichai. Yes, the First Lady has shown great concern about Aung San Suu Kyi.

The President. Absolutely, and as should the world. Here is a very heroic woman that

was elected overwhelmingly by her people, and has now been under house arrest by a group of military guys that just simply won't allow the will of the people to flourish. And so we're concerned about that. And I do want to thank the Thai people and the Thai Government for its humanitarian missions on the border. I think it's very constructive and very helpful. And I will be speaking to activists to let them know that the United States of America hears their voices. And, you know, it's a tough issue for some countries.

First Lady Laura Bush

Mr. Suthichai. Will the First Lady meet the dissidents and also call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi?

The President. I'm sure she'll do that. I mean, she does that all the time. You know, I'm not sure exactly what her schedule is. You caught me off-guard about her schedule, but I can assure you it will be comprehensive, and she'll make a very good impression.

Burma

Mr. Suthichai. Why haven't the sanctions against Burma worked?

The President. Because not every country is applying them. And sanctions—the idea of unilateral sanctions, they're effective only to a certain extent. And, therefore, other countries must also join, and, frankly, there's some countries in the neighborhood that aren't interested in joining.

Olympic Games/China-U.S. Relations

Mr. Suthichai. Yes. You are going to Beijing Olympics.

The President. Yes, sir.

Mr. Suthichai. What is the signal? Because some people say that you are going there as a sports fan, but are you going as a sports fan or as President of the United States?

The President. I'm going as the President who happens to be a sports fan. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Suthichai. Right.

The President. No, the signal—look, there's a couple of signals, and it's very important to understand. One is I don't think the Olympics should be politicized. I mean, it is a sporting event of the greatest caliber. Secondly, I am going out of respect for the people of China. This is a big deal for the Chinese people and I'm—and that's why I'm going. Thirdly, I will have, and always have had, very frank and candid discussions with the Chinese Government on a variety of issues.

And I'm confident that by showing respect to the people, to the Olympics, it will give me—put me in a position to continue to having frank and candid discussions. It's—when you show respect to a group of people, it gives you credibility when it comes time to discuss difficult issues. And we will discuss difficult issues in a very cordial and respectful way.

Freedom Agenda/China-U.S. Relations

Mr. Suthichai. Yesterday you met five Chinese dissidents——

The President. Yes, sir, I did.

Mr. Suthichai. And what did you tell them? Are you going to tell the Chinese leadership about their concerns?

The President. Of course I will. I do it every time I meet—oh, absolutely. I mean, their concern is religious freedom and political freedom. And I discuss religious freedom and political freedom with the Chinese leaders every time.

Mr. Suthichai. And they don't seem offended?

The President. No, I don't think so, because they know it's done out of respect. It's done out of—you know, in a way that I hope is—in a way that they will listen. That's my whole point. If you treat a people with respect and when it comes time to discuss your differences, people will be more willing to listen. And, look, I'm the only President to have ever stood up in public with the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Suthichai. Right.

The President. I told President Hu Jintao I was going to do that. He didn't like it, but I did it.

Mr. Suthichai. You did it anyway.

The President. Yes, I did. And so my only point is there are moments of great opportunity for us to work together on a variety of fronts, and we have. And there are going to be moments of disagreement. But I've worked hard to make sure those moments of disagreement are done in such a way that

it doesn't rupture relations, or doesn't embarrass somebody, or doesn't humiliate. And I think when people look at my Presidency, when it's all said and done, they'll say, "It's amazing that the Bush administration had good, strong relations with South Korea, Japan, China, Thailand, India." And I happen to believe that it's—it enhances the stability of the region and helps all of us grow in a constructive way.

President's Legacy

Mr. Suthichai. What is going to be your legacy?

The President. Oh, I don't know. I'll be dead when they finally figure it out.

Mr. Suthichai. But what do you want history to remember you——

The President. Somebody who took on tough challenges and didn't shy away from doing what he thought was right. And, you know, look, I'm a big believer in freedom and liberty. That's been a hallmark of my agenda. But I—there's no such thing as short-term history, so I am very confident in telling you that I'll be long gone before somebody finally figures out the true merit and meaning of the Bush administration.

Six-Party Talks/North Korea

Mr. Suthichai. Were you impressed by the meeting between Secretary of State Condi with the North Korean representative in Singapore recently?

The President. I thought it was—what impressed me was that the foreign ministers all—at the six-party talks, all said the same thing to the North Korean: If you want to move forward, verify, honor your commitments; if you don't honor your commitments, then there will be additional sanctions and additional measures.

Mr. Suthichai. Are they positive?

The President. The visits? Yes, I think they've been positive. There's just some fundamental questions. There's a lot of doubt as to whether or not the six-party talks will bear fruition. One thing is for certain: They destroyed their cooling tower. Everybody saw that.

Mr. Suthichai. Right, right.

The President. But will they verify their plutonium programs and HEU programs and proliferation programs? I hope so. They said they would. Now, whether or not they put a verification regime in place that we can trust, we'll see.

President's Future

Mr. Suthichai. Sir, last question—is there life after the White House?

The President. Absolutely. I'm only 62 years old.

Mr. Suthichai. What do you plan to do?

The President. You know, I'm going to write; I'm going to share my experiences. I'm going to build a policy center and library at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Hopefully, I will contribute to mankind in positive ways. I haven't really had time to think about it because when you're the President of the United States, you got a lot to think about day by day. But I'm looking forward to finishing strong, and then I'm going home to Texas. That's where I was raised, that's where I'm from, and that's where I'm going to retire.

Mr. Suthichai. That's good, sir. Thank you very much.

The President. Yes, sir.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 2:25 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to Tenzin Gyatso, the Dalai Lama of Tibet; and Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea. Suthichai Sae-Yoon referred to Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy in Burma; and Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun of North Korea. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on July 31. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Fuqing Yang, CCTV, China

July 30, 2008

Mr. Yang. So, thank you very much, Mr. President, for joining us.

The President. Thank you, sir.

Olympic Games

Mr. Yang. The much anticipated Beijing Olympic games will be opening in Beijing in just about a week's time. And you will be attending the opening ceremonies on August