

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong of Singapore

April 2, 2013

President Obama. Well, it is a great pleasure for me to welcome my good friend, Prime Minister Lee, to the Oval Office. He and I have had interacted in a whole range of international fora, and not surprisingly, he has proven to be an outstanding partner for us on the international stage, not surprising because Singapore and the United States have historically had an extraordinary relationship. Singapore is one of the most successful countries in the world.

I think their progress and their development over the last several decades has been an example for many countries around the world. We have extremely close military cooperation. And I want to thank Singapore for all the facilities that they provide that allow us to maintain our effective Pacific presence.

They are an outstanding economic partner. Over the last decade, since we signed our free trade agreement, we have seen a doubling of trade between our countries, and that creates jobs here in the United States as well as in Singapore. As a leader in ASEAN and the East Asia Summit, they've provided, I think, a steady vision of how countries in the Pacific region can cooperate effectively for the prosperity and security of all and are strong promoters of rules of the road and international norms that the United States strongly supports.

And so, across the board, we have very much appreciated the extraordinary relationship between our two countries. And personally, I can tell you that there are very few world leaders who I am more appreciative of, in terms of their advice and counsel and thoughtful analysis, than Prime Minister Lee.

And as we continue the process that we called rebalancing when I first came into office, we've continued to seek out the advice and good counsel of Singapore in how to effect that in a way that creates not only strong security, but also increase prosperity for both the United States and the countries of the region.

So I'm very thankful for Singapore and its partnership. I'm thankful for Prime Minister Lee for his outstanding work. I'm grateful for the people of Singapore. As many of you know, I spent some time in my youth in this part of the world and have a great fondness and affection for the people of Singapore. I'm extraordinarily pleased to see their great success, and I'm looking forward to a very productive discussion about how we can continue to improve prospects for people not just in the Asia-Pacific region, but around the world.

So thank you very much, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Lee. Well, thank you, Mr. President. I'm very happy to be here in Washington during cherry blossom season and very honored to be calling on the President so early in his second term.

We have very good relations between Singapore and the United States, grown in deep cooperation. We work together in education, research and development. We work together in economic areas and trade. We work together in counterterrorism and defense. And it's a comprehensive relationship, and we look forward particularly in the next few weeks to

welcoming the first littoral combat ship, which will be arriving in Singapore, and we will be playing host to it for a few months.

But more broadly, Singapore is very happy that the U.S. and the Obama administration has been putting greater emphasis on its relations with Asia, that it's rebalancing towards Asia, and that it's engaging Asia across many fronts, not just security, but also economics, also cultural and educational. And Singapore would like to be of help in furthering this process in deepening the relationship.

The TPP, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, is a very important part of it, and we're working on that agenda now. There's also work going on deepening ASEAN's relations with the United States, which the President initiated when we last met in November back then.

And there are other important bilateral relationships in Asia, including what is perhaps the most important bilateral relationship in the world, which is between the U.S. and China. And we are happy that the administration's attention is focused on this, and Singapore will do our part what we can to help America engage the region constructively, productively, and in a way which fosters stability and prosperity for all other countries.

So I'm very happy to be here, to be calling on this President, and I hope I'll have the opportunity to invite him to come and visit Singapore before too long and for me to reciprocate his wonderful hospitality.

President Obama. Thank you very much, everybody. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:14 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : Singapore, Prime Minister Lee.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Lee Hsien Loong.

Subjects: Asia : Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Asia : East Asia Summit; Asia : Relations with U.S.; Singapore : Defense relationship with U.S.; Singapore : Free trade agreement with U.S.; Singapore : Prime Minister; Singapore : Relations with U.S.

DCPD Number: DCPD201300211.