

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida of Japan
April 10, 2024

President Biden. Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kishida, welcome. Welcome, welcome, welcome. On behalf of Jill and me, the Vice President and the Second Gentleman, and all the American people, welcome to the White House.

Sixty-four years ago, our two nations signed a treaty of mutual cooperation and security. President Eisenhower said his goal was to establish an indestructible partnership between our countries. Today, the world can see that goal has been achieved and that partnership between us is unbreakable.

The alliance between Japan and the United States is a cornerstone of peace, security, prosperity in the Indo-Pacific and around the world. Ours is truly a global partnership. For that, Mr. Prime Minister Kishida, I thank you.

The Prime Minister is a visionary and courageous leader. When Russia began its brutal invasion of Ukraine 2 years ago, he did not hesitate to condemn, sanction, and isolate Russia and provide billions in assistance to Ukraine.

Under his leadership, Japan set in motion profound changes in its defense policies and its capabilities. Now—now—our two countries are building a stronger defense partnership and a stronger Indo-Pacific than ever before.

As President of the G-7 last year, the Prime Minister rallied Japan's partners to take action on nuclear disarmament, global poverty, economic resilience, and other critical issues that shape peace, security, and opportunity for billions of people around the world.

And last year, the Prime Minister took one of the boldest steps yet when he and President Yoon of the Republic of Korea decided to heal old wounds and start a new chapter of friendship. Our historic summit that I hosted at Camp David marked the start of an entirely new era infused with hope, shared values, and focused relentlessly forward because these leaders know that the division that defined us in the past do not need to define us in the future.

That has also been the story of Japan and the United States. Just a few generations ago, our two nations were blocked in a devastating conflict. It would have been easy to say we remain adversaries. Instead, we made a far better choice: We became the closest of friends.

Today, our economic relationship is one of the strongest and deepest in the world. Our democracies are beacons of freedom, shining across the globe. And the ties of friendship, family connect the Japanese and American people as a source of joy, meaning—and meaning for millions—millions—of our people.

Japanese Americans have made historic contributions across American life for generations. And that includes my mentor and one of my closest friends ever in the United States Senate, Senator Daniel Inouye, a decorated war hero, a U.S. Senator for nearly 50 years, and a recipient of the Medal of Honor.

Yesterday Prime Minister laid a wreath at the National Japanese American Memorial in honor of Danny Inouye's 100th birthday, something I truly appreciate you having done.

Mr. Prime Minister, you and I have been entrusted with protecting and advancing the monumental alliance between our two great democracies. Together, we made it closer, stronger, and more effective than ever before in history.

I thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for your partnership, your leadership, and your personal friendship.

Let me end with this. It's spring in Washington. The sun is shining. And every spring, cherry blossoms bloom across the city thanks to a gift from Japan of 3,000 cherry trees over a century ago. People travel all over our country and the world to see these magnificent blossoms.

Last night the Prime Minister and Mrs. Kishida, Jill and I, took a stroll down the driveway across the lawn here at the White House to visit three cherry blossom trees. One that Jill and Mrs. Kishida planted together a year ago. The other two are among the 250 new trees that Japan has given the United States to honor our 250th birthday 2 years from now. They'll be planted at the Tidal Basin, not far from the Martin Luther King Memorial. And like our friendship, these trees are timeless, inspiring, and thriving.

May God bless the Japanese and American people, and may God protect our troops.

Mr. Prime Minister, Mr. Kishida, welcome back to the White House. The floor is yours.

[At this point, Prime Minister Kishida spoke briefly in English as follows.]

Prime Minister Kishida. Thank you. Thank you for those kind words.

President Biden. The trouble is, we're becoming good friends. *[Laughter]*

Please.

White House aide. Distinguished guests, the Prime Minister of Japan.

Prime Minister Kishida. Mr. President, Dr. Biden, distinguished guests: I thank President Biden for the warm words of welcome. I am very pleased to see that the cherry trees that my wife Yuko planted with Dr. Biden last year is growing beautifully.

The cherry trees along the Potomac River are a symbol of the friendship between Japan and the United States. These Japanese-born cherry trees have been sounding the arrival of spring to the city every year for over 110 years. Just as the local residents have cherished and protected these cherry trees, the Japan-U.S. relationship has been supported and nurtured by the many people who love each other's country.

The development of the Japan-U.S. relationship is the fruit of the historical cooperation between the two countries. Along with the trust between the leaders and cooperation between our governments, numerous people-to-people exchanges in ranging fields have shaped the friendship between our countries.

The cooperation between our countries, bound together by common values and commitments, has become a global one with the scope and depth covering outer space and the deep sea.

Today, the world faces more challenges and difficulties than ever before. As a global partner, Japan will join hands with our American friends, and together, we will lead the way in tackling the challenges of the Indo-Pacific region and the world while tirelessly developing the relationship between our countries with a view to the world 10 and even 100 years from now.

In Japan, it is said that the Somei Yoshino, which are the cherry trees planted in this area, have a lifespan of about 60 years. However, thanks to the efforts of the cherry tree guardians, the trees have shown their strong vitality, blooming beautifully for more than 100 years without waning.

When I heard that some of the trees would be replaced, as President Biden mentioned earlier, I decided to send 250 new cherry trees to commemorate the upcoming 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

The friendship between Japan and the United States will continue to grow and bloom around the world, thriving on friendship, respect, and trust of the people of both countries. I am confident that the cherry blossom–like bond of the Japan-U.S. alliance will continue to grow even thicker and stronger here, in the Indo-Pacific, and in all corners of the world.

Mr. President, Dr. Biden, distinguished guests: Thank you, once again, for your warm welcome, hospitality, and friendship.

[Prime Minister Kishida spoke briefly in English as follows.]

Thank you so much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:14 a.m. on the South Lawn at the White House, where Prime Minister Kishida was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, the President referred to Douglas C. Emhoff, husband of Vice President Kamala D. Harris.

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