

The White House,
May 14, 2003.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Roh Moo-hyun of South
Korea
May 14, 2003

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome our good friend the President of South Korea to Washington, DC, and the Oval Office and now the Rose Garden. I've been really looking forward to this visit. We've had several phone calls where we've discussed important issues, and now we've had a chance to discuss important issues face to face.

I have found the President to be an easy man to talk to. He expresses opinions very clearly, and it's easy to understand. One thing is for certain: We will work to have the best possible relations between our countries, and it's based upon close consultation on a wide variety of issues. There's no question in my mind we'll have the kind of personal relationship where we can—will consult freely to solve major problems.

We of course discussed the need to have a nuclear-weapons-free Korean Peninsula. I assured the President we will continue to work to achieve a peaceful solution. We're making good progress toward achieving that peaceful resolution of the issue of the Korean Peninsula in regards to North Korea.

We talked about other issues. One important issue is to make sure we continue working closely on economic issues. I have confidence in regards to the South Korean economy. I believe South Korea will continue to be an engine for economic growth and vitality. And I look forward to working with the President to continue to foster very strong bilateral relations.

So, Mr. President, I'm glad you're here. Welcome.

President Roh. When I left Korea, I had both concerns and hopes in my mind. Now, after having talked to President Bush, I have gotten rid of all my concerns, and now I return to Korea only with hopes in my mind.

In a very short period of time, we have smoothly reached an agreement. It was not even necessary to tell President Bush all the logic that I had in mind to convince him before I came here. President Bush had an accurate idea of what concerned me and what were my hopes. And I second to what President Bush has just stated.

There is one thing that he didn't mention. We have reached agreement that the Korea-U.S. alliance have been maintaining its strength over the past 50 years, and it will become only more stronger in the coming 50 years or even more. And I could think of many achievements that we both obtained from this meeting, but the most important one of those is the fact that President Bush and I had a very frank and candid discussion. And apart from our national agenda, we also built a close, personal friendship.

I would like to rephrase myself. We have reached agreements on many national agenda issues, but more importantly, we have become to trust each other and have confidence in each other.

I would like to reiterate my heartfelt thanks to President Bush and his aides for providing me with this opportunity. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:42 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. President Roh spoke in Korean, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of Korea: Common Values, Principles, and Strategy May 14, 2003

On May 14, 2003, President George W. Bush of the United States of America and President Roh Moo-hyun of the Republic of Korea held a summit meeting at the White House in Washington, D.C. Noting that 2003 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty, the two leaders pledged to work together to promote the values of democracy, human rights and market economy shared by the people of both nations and to build a comprehensive and dynamic alliance relationship for continued peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia.

The U.S.-ROK Alliance

President Bush and President Roh welcomed the fiftieth anniversary of the U.S.-ROK alliance and paid tribute to those who have contributed to the alliance, particularly the Korean host communities and the members of U.S. Forces Korea (USFK) who have devoted themselves to the defense of peace and freedom on the peninsula. President Bush reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to a robust forward presence on the peninsula and in the Asia-Pacific region. The two leaders pledged to work closely together to modernize the U.S.-ROK alliance, taking advantage of technology to transform both nations' forces and enhance their capabilities to meet emerging threats.

In the context of modernizing the alliance, the two leaders agreed to work out plans to consolidate U.S. forces around key hubs and to relocate the Yongsan garrison at an early date. President Bush pledged

to consult closely with President Roh on the appropriate posture for USFK during the transition to a more capable and sustainable U.S. military presence on the peninsula. They shared the view that the relocation of U.S. bases north of the Han River should be pursued, taking careful account of the political, economic and security situation on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia. The two leaders also noted the opportunity provided by the Republic of Korea's growing national strength to continue expanding the role of the ROK armed forces in defending the Korean Peninsula.

President Bush and President Roh welcomed the growing bilateral U.S.-ROK cooperation on international security challenges beyond the Korean Peninsula. President Bush thanked President Roh for his support on Iraq and welcomed the Republic of Korea's decision to deploy medical and construction units and undertake other efforts to assist with post-conflict humanitarian assistance and reconstruction in Iraq. President Roh expressed his support for U.S. and international efforts to establish lasting peace and security in the Middle East. The two leaders also reviewed progress and cooperation in the war on terror, noting the contribution of ROK forces to Operation Enduring Freedom and Afghan reconstruction.

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the alliance, the two Presidents welcomed the convening of forums of experts to conduct discussions on the future of U.S.-ROK relations and to generate fresh ideas for both governments.