

ship help. And so thanks very much, and please thank His Majesty for his generous contribution to the folks down there.

Thank you, sir. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat of Thailand *September 19, 2005*

President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat met today to reaffirm the strength of the U.S.-Thai alliance and the importance of bilateral cooperation in regional and global affairs. Both leaders recognized the special and enduring bonds between the two countries as well as between the American and Thai people, demonstrated most recently by the close cooperation following last December's devastating tsunami and after Hurricane Katrina. President Bush expressed his admiration for the resilience and determination of the Thai people and government in rebuilding areas affected by the tsunami and pledged continued U.S. assistance. The President noted Thailand's effort to mobilize support for an establishment of a regional tsunami early warning system.

Prime Minister Thaksin once again expressed his profound condolences for American casualties and the devastation from Hurricane Katrina. President Bush expressed his appreciation for His Majesty the King of Thailand's donations for the people affected by Hurricane Katrina and for Thailand's dispatch of emergency relief supplies.

The two leaders welcomed the expanding and deepening security cooperation that has followed Thailand's designation as a Major Non-NATO Ally and discussed plans to inaugurate a senior-level bilateral dialogue on strategic and security issues in Bangkok this fall. They also directed their officials to work together on a comprehensive Plan of Action covering all major areas of coopera-

tion, aiming to serve as a roadmap to maximize the benefits arising from close and productive U.S.-Thai relations. In that context, the two leaders emphasized the importance of trilateral cooperation to support economic and social development in countries where both the U.S. and Thailand are working.

The two leaders discussed the importance of stepping up efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and pledged to explore cooperation in the Proliferation Security Initiative. The President noted the outstanding cooperation by U.S. and Thai military forces in this year's Cobra Gold joint exercises.

Both leaders expressed concern over current trends in Burma. Stressing their shared objectives of promoting democracy and national reconciliation in Burma, both sides agreed to have closer consultations on this matter. The two leaders noted that they had called for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other jailed political activists when they met in 2003 and reiterated that this step was necessary for a credible process of political dialogue for all parties.

Prime Minister Thaksin briefed President Bush on Bangkok's efforts to deal with the violence in southern Thailand while preserving the democratic freedom that has made Thailand a leader in Southeast Asia. The President commended the Prime Minister's creation of a National Reconciliation Commission aimed at developing a broad-based approach to the South that combines

security, equitable development, and protection for basic rights.

The two leaders agreed to make vigorous efforts to reach conclusion on the U.S.-Thai Free Trade Agreement (FTA) next year. They expressed satisfaction with the fourth round of talks held in Montana in July and looked forward to the 5th round next week in Hawaii. President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin agreed that the FTA must be beneficial to the people of both countries and comprehensive in its mandate, and it must address issues of importance to both sides.

The two leaders welcomed the signing of an Air Transport Agreement between the two countries that would provide substantial benefits to travelers and businesses and further expand bilateral economic linkages.

As the coordinator for ASEAN dialogue with the United States, Thailand plays a key role in U.S. engagement in Southeast Asia. President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin discussed regional and development issues and ways to enhance U.S.-Thai cooperation in regional forums, particularly the ASEAN Regional Forum and the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conferences, as well as the vital nexus of economic, trade, and security issues at APEC. President Bush noted that he was looking forward

to meeting jointly with ASEAN members of APEC at the Leaders' Meeting in Busan this November. The two leaders also expressed their support for the Aceh peace agreement underway in Indonesia and praised the serious efforts of both sides in achieving such a breakthrough.

Both leaders underscored the importance of combating infectious diseases and the urgency of addressing avian flu in particular. President Bush applauded Prime Minister Thaksin's leadership in responding to outbreaks in his country. The two leaders agreed on the critical importance of transparency, close monitoring, and cooperation across sectors and with international health organizations by all countries in the region. They pledged to intensify cooperation on global efforts to respond to this critical emerging issue.

President Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin agreed on the potential for even greater coordination on areas of mutual concern and overlapping interest and looked forward to meeting again in November at APEC.

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this joint statement.

Statement on the Recommendations of the National Commission on Election Reform

September 19, 2005

I greatly appreciate the excellent work of the bipartisan commission in identifying ways to strengthen the integrity of the voting process. It is critical to maintain Amer-

ica's trust in our election system, and I look forward to reviewing this report and working with Congress on the recommendations.