

The President. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:34 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. In his remarks, the President

referred to President Hu Jintao of China; and Chairman Kim Chong-il of North Korea. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Interview With Eagle Television of Mongolia November 8, 2005

President's Upcoming Visit to Mongolia

Gonchigjav Batjav. So there are many developing countries in Asia. So why did you choose to visit Mongolia at this time?

The President. First of all, I am really looking forward to going. This is going to be an exciting trip for me and Laura. Mongolia has got a certain fascination for me. I grew up in the West of the United States where there's—where we like wide-open spaces. And when you think about Mongolia, you think about a big country with a lot of space. But what's interesting about Mongolia is it's more than geography now, as far as I'm concerned. It's a people that have worked hard to become free, a democracy.

We kind of consider ourselves—and we like the slogan, “the third neighbor” of Mongolia. And so I've chosen to go there because of the spirit of the people and a leadership that shares our desire to let the—to have a government of and by and for the people.

Democratic Values

Mr. Batjav. Great. So, Mr. President, let's talk for a moment about America's foreign policy.

The President. Okay.

Mr. Batjav. Democracies change leaders every few years, so in that change often comes a change in a nation's foreign policy. So what steps has your administration taken to ensure that the foreign policy initiatives you have taken will continue to be guiding

principles for the U.S. after you leave the White House?

The President. Thank you. That's a very interesting question. First of all, there are certain values that are inherent in our country that any leader will bring to the White House, the value of human rights, human dignity, freedom to worship, freedom of the press, freedom to speak your mind. And so foreign policy will have inherent in it those values.

The other thing is, is that once democracy takes hold—it's hard work to make it work, but once it takes hold, it's hard to change it. Because democracy really speaks to the people and says, “We listen to you. You're free. You can realize your dreams.” And so one of the things my administration is doing is working in places where there hasn't been democracy. I think of the Palestinian Territories or Iraq. We're working in places where there's a new democracy to help strengthen those democracies. Lebanon is a good example—Georgia, Ukraine. We're working with countries that have dedicated themselves to democracy but want the friendship of the United States to help them even further democracy. And Mongolia is such a case.

And so one way you leave behind a foundation that others can't undo is to give people—help people develop a form of government that just can't be unwound unless something catastrophic were to take place inside the country.

Mongolia-U.S. Relations

Mr. Batjav. Okay, great. So as part of our new relationship, Mongolia has contributed our peacekeeping troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. So in the future, if there are any military threats against Mongolia by its neighbors, would the U.S., under your administration, also rise to our defense?

The President. That's a very good question. We're close friends. And by being friends, I think we can prevent any potential military dispute from arising. But of course we would support our friends. We certainly would—nobody anticipates over the next 3 years of my administration, any force being used against our friend. But my visit should send a signal to the people of Mongolia that you've got a friend in the United States and a friend in George W. Bush.

Democracy in Mongolia

Mr. Batjav. Great to hear it. So during your visit to Mongolia, you will be addressing the nation in a wide televised address. So our nation is experiencing a crisis of corruption.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Batjav. So you will be speaking to our leaders and our nation about the dangers that corruption poses to our democracy. Can you give us a preview about it?

The President. Well, I'm not going to give you a preview of the speech, because then people may not watch it if they get a preview, see. On the other hand, I will say on your TV screens, there should be no corruption in government, that one of the foundations of any government is the ability for the people to trust the government, itself. And a foundation of democracy and a foundation of our foreign policy and a foundation of our Millennium Challenge Account is that there be honest government.

Millennium Challenge Accounts

Mr. Batjav. Okay. The next related question is going to be to Millennium Challenge.

The President. Okay.

Mr. Batjav. So how has the issue of political corruption affected Mongolia's status for the Millennium Challenge Account?

The President. Well, we intend to move forward on the Millennium Challenge Account with Mongolia. Mongolia is a friend. On the other hand, we will insist that as a condition of the Millennium Challenge checks being written that there be honest government, that there be investment in health and education of the people, that there be a dedication to rule of law and to the marketplace.

Democracy in Mongolia

Mr. Batjav. Okay, the last question is so important for our television. You might be aware that the Eagle Television was the first independent TV station established in Mongolia, with American Christians and Mongolians are working together to advance freedom of speech, press, and conscience in our country. So, first, how do you feel about the role of ordinary American citizens supporting this kind of work for Mongolia's democracy? And the second, what further role do you think the ordinary American citizens can play in helping to address faith and freedom in Mongolia through media?

The President. Very good question. First of all, I believe in a free media, and I believe that people ought to—and a media that is independent from government, like we have in America, is an important part of a society. In other words, government officials should not fear a free media; they ought to welcome a free media.

Listen, in my own media, I don't agree with everything that is said, but I strongly support their right to say it, just like I strongly support the right of people of faith to be involved with helping to spread this concept of freedom.

Secondly, I think investments will help the people of Mongolia. In other words, there's a way for people in America, businesses for example, to invest in Mongolia, because that means jobs and stability and a good future.

But no, listen, you'll find Americans are very compassionate people that love freedom, and they want to help people be free. And by the way, your form of government is democracy, but it ought to reflect your traditions and your great history. And I know it is.

Listen, I'm looking forward to going to your wonderful country. It's going to be a fantastic experience. I'm excited. I truly am excited to come.

Mr. Batjav. Great. Thank you, sir.

The President. Yes, very good job. Thank you.

NOTE: The interview was taped at 1:43 p.m. in the Map Room at the White House for later broadcast. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks on South Asia Earthquake Relief Efforts November 9, 2005

One month ago, the nation of Pakistan suffered its worst natural disaster in a century when a massive earthquake struck northeast of the capital city of Islamabad. The human toll is staggering. This disaster has taken the lives of more than 70,000 Pakistanis. It has injured almost 70,000 more and left nearly 3 million people without their homes. In India, the earthquake killed more than a thousand people and injured over 6,000 others.

As the harsh mountain winter approaches, millions of people in these affected areas will continue to need food, water, shelter, and medical care. They will also need long-term help to get their lives and communities back on their feet. Once again, the world is called to comfort those affected by a terrible natural catastrophe. People across our country pray for the people in Southeast Asia, and people in our country are willing to help as well.

The United States is playing a leading role in the relief and recovery efforts, in cooperation with the Government of Pakistan. We've already made \$156 million available for relief and reconstruction needs. We've provided food, water, blankets, tents, and medical care. We have dis-

aster response personnel on the ground to assess needs and offer assistance.

Our military is playing a key role as well. A Navy construction battalion is helping to clear roads and solve other engineering challenges. Our helicopters have flown over a thousand missions to deliver aid to isolated areas. And they have transported thousands of people to places where they can receive medical treatment and shelter. We've also got a military hospital now operating in Pakistan. I'm grateful to the men and women in uniform for the noble work they are doing, and they represent the best of America, the generous spirit of our country. Our government's response to this tragedy is—should say to the people of the world, we care when somebody else suffers.

Last month, I announced that five distinguished American business leaders would work to encourage private and corporate contributions to help those affected by the natural disasters in Southeast Asia. Jeff Immelt, Jim Kelly, Hank McKinnell, and Sandy Weill are with us today, and I want to thank you all for being here. Anne Mulcahy of Xerox is not here, but she's a part of the team. I want to thank them very much for their willingness to serve,