

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister John Howard of Australia and an Exchange With Reporters in Hanoi, Vietnam
November 17, 2006

President Bush. I just had an enjoyable lunch with my friend John Howard. We talked about a variety of subjects. I talked to John about Iraq. I appreciate the Australian contributions to helping this young democracy succeed. There's a lot of questions, I know, in the press around the world about our troop posture and about the attitudes of our Government. I assured John that we will get the job done. We will continue to help this Maliki Government meet the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

And that—I'm sure there's some questions by the Australian press about what the elections mean. The elections mean that the American people want to know whether or not we have a plan for success, and that—and I assured John that any repositioning of troops, if that's what we choose to do, will be done in close consultation with John and his Government. But I also assured him that we're not leaving until this job is done, until Iraq can govern, sustain, and defend itself.

We talked about the climate. John has got some very strong ideas about the use of technologies to enable countries like our own and the rest of the world to be able to grow and, at the same time, protect the environment. And I appreciated his views. And I share those views. I assured him that we will continue to spend research dollars to develop technologies such as clean coal technologies, something that Australia is interested in, or the use of ethanol, for example, to power our automobiles, or money spent to develop hydrogen fuel cells, all aimed at changing our energy habits and, at the same time, protecting the environment.

We talked about the neighborhood that Australia is in. I always admire John's strategic vision of the world. I really appreciate the chance to have lunch with you.

Prime Minister Howard. Well, thank you very much, George. We did cover all of those subjects, and we spent a lot of time, naturally, talking about Iraq. Our views are very similar. It's not easy, but we hold to the view, and I've said it back in Australia, and I'd repeat it here today, that the idea of the coalition leaving in circumstances where the Iraqi people were not soon to be able to look after themselves and to enjoy the democracy they want would be a catastrophic defeat for our cause, not only in the Middle East, but it would embolden terrorists in that region. And it would embolden terrorism in countries like Indonesia.

Our discussions about climate change were very valuable. Our thinking is similar. We don't believe that Kyoto is the answer. Both our countries are committed to dealing with the growth of greenhouse gasses. We can have debate about the severity of the problem, but there's really no debate about the desirability of responding to it, provided we do it in a way that maintains economic growth in our societies and the world.

And we certainly have a similarity of commitment to doing things in the area of technology. And I indicated to the President that Australia is looking very seriously at the place of nuclear power in our own response. And the Australian media will be aware of the upcoming Switkowski report that is going to deal with the whole question of nuclear power in the overall equation.

President Bush. We'll answer a couple of questions. Jennifer [Jennifer Loven, Associated Press]. Hold on for a second, please. Jennifer.

Vietnam-U.S. Relations

Q. Thank you, sir. What does it mean to you personally and what do you think it means to other Americans who experienced some of the turbulence of the Vietnam war that you're here now, talking cooperation and peace with a former enemy?

President Bush. You know, Laura and I were talking about—we were talking about how amazing it is we're here in Vietnam. And one of the most poignant moments of the drive in was passing the lake where John McCain got pulled out of the lake. And he's a friend of ours. He suffered a lot as a result of his imprisonment, and yet we passed the place where he was, literally, saved, in one way, by the people pulling him out.

I guess my first reaction is, history has a long march to it and that societies change and relationships can constantly be altered to the good. And I'm looking forward to my meetings with the President and the Prime Minister here shortly. I found it really interesting, for example, that the Prime Minister's children were educated in the United States. The Prime Minister of Vietnam, who, as I understand it, was part of the Viet Cong, sends his children to our country to get educated, and one of his children ended up marrying a Vietnamese American. And it shows how hopeful the world can be and how people can reconcile and move beyond past difficulties for the common good.

Vietnam is an exciting place. It's a place with an enormous future, and they obviously have got to work through difficulties like religious freedom, for example, but nevertheless, there's certainly a new hopefulness to this country. And so I'm—thought a lot about what it was like, what my impressions of Vietnam were growing up, and here I am in this country today, and I guess my answer is, it's very hopeful.

Democracy Efforts in Iraq

Q. Are there lessons here for the debate over Iraq?

President Bush. I think one thing—yes, I mean, one lesson is, is that we tend to want there to be instant success in the world, and the task in Iraq is going to take a while. But I would make it beyond just Iraq. I think the great struggle we're going to have is between radicals and extremists versus people who want to live in peace, and that Iraq is a part of the struggle. And it's just going to take a long period of time to—for the ideology that is hopeful, and that is an ideology of freedom, to overcome an ideology of hate. Yet the world that we live in today is one where they want things to happen immediately.

And it's hard work in Iraq. That's why I'm so proud to have a partner like John Howard who understands it's difficult to get the job done. We'll succeed unless we quit. The Maliki Government is going to make it unless the coalition leaves before they have a chance to make it. And that's why I assured the Prime Minister we'll get the job done.

Do you want to ask somebody?

Australia-U.S. Cooperation on Iraq

Q. Mr. President, did the Prime Minister raise any new ideas on Iraq during your talks? Can you tell us what they are, and will you be taking them up?

President Bush. The Prime Minister's main concern was that we consult closely together. And I assured him that's going to be the case. That's the way it has been throughout this war on terror. We value Australia's commitments; I value John Howard's advice. And when our deliberations are complete—and as you may or may not know, we've got a lot of people looking at different tactical adjustments—once I make up my mind what those will be, I'll share it with him right off the bat.

Let's see here, yes, Steve [Steve Holland, Reuters].

U.S. Armed Forces in Iraq

Q. You mentioned troop postures in Iraq. There's a report that you may want to send

30,000 additional troops to Iraq. Is that something—

President Bush. Where was that report?

Q. In the Guardian newspaper.

President Bush. The Guardian newspaper? Well, I don't read that paper often. But I—look, I'm going to listen to our commanders, Steve. Ours is a condition-based strategy, and Pete Pace is conducting a thorough study—he's the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. John Abizaid has got some ideas, and the Baker-Hamilton commission is looking. I want to hear from Democrats on Capitol Hill what their views may be. I want to hear from my fellow Republicans on Capitol Hill. And then I'll make up my mind. So I'm not aware of the Guardian article.

Q. Can I ask another question?

President Bush. Sure, since you fumbled that question. You might get—let Gregory [David Gregory, NBC News] substitute for you.

North Korea

Q. Are you getting sufficient cooperation from South Korea on North Korea? And will this be something you talk to them about tomorrow?

President Bush. Oh, absolutely. I'll remind—

Q. —they're not following through on the sanctions as hard as they could have.

President Bush. I'll, of course, talk to the South Korean President about implementing the United Nations Security Council resolution. I'll talk to Vladimir Putin, Hu Jintao, and Prime Minister Abe as well. I'm meeting with all our partners in the six-party talks.

The APEC is an important summit; it's an important opportunity to talk about the importance of free trade. But it's also important to give us a chance to talk about other issues, and a key issue that John and I, by the way, talked about is going to be North Korea. We have a chance to solve this issue peacefully and diplomatically. It's important for the world to see that the

Security Council resolutions which were passed are implemented. So part of my discussions will be how we fully implement those sanctions that the world has asked for, but also, it's a chance to set the conditions right so that the six-party talks will succeed. North Korea, as you know, has decided to come back to the table, and it gives us a chance to solve this problem peacefully.

Military Tribunals

Q. Mr. President, did you discuss the issue of David Hicks at all with the Prime Minister? And when do you think he might come to trial?

President Bush. Yes, we did. The Prime Minister brought it up. He was pleased that I was able to sign the military tribunal bill, in other words, a way forward for somebody like Hicks to be able to get a day in court. And he was asking me, do I have a timetable in mind as to when Hicks's trial will be coming forth? I told him I didn't, although we hope that Hicks is one of the early people that will have a day in court.

Interestingly enough, as I understand, Hicks has lawyers that may be trying to appeal certain aspects of the law we passed. If that's the case, he's having his day in court in an interesting way. But I believe Hicks deserves a trial and is going to get it.

Thank you all very much.

Prime Minister Howard. Thank you.

Q. One more, do you feel generous, one more?

President Bush. No, I'm not generous. It's also hot out here, Gregory. We're in the sun; you're not. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:17 p.m. at the Sheraton Hanoi. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki of Iraq; President Nguyen Minh Triet and Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung of Vietnam; Gen. John P. Abizaid, USA, commander, U.S. Central Command; President

Roh Moo-hyun of South Korea; President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia; President Hu Jintao of China; Prime Minister Shinzo Abe

of Japan; and Australian citizen David M. Hicks, a detainee at the U.S. Naval Station in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Nguyen Minh Triet of
Vietnam in Hanoi
November 17, 2006

Mr. President, thank you very much for your hospitality. Laura and I have been struck by the friendliness of the people of Vietnam. In our drive through this beautiful city, we were pleased to see thousands of your citizens with smiles on their faces. And we're so grateful.

I've been reading and studying about your country, and I have seen now firsthand the great vibrancy and the excitement that's taking place in Vietnam. You're like

a young tiger, and I look forward to continuing to work to make sure our bilateral relations are close. And thank you for hosting APEC. And thank you for hosting a dinner for us tonight. We're really looking forward to it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. at the Presidential Palace. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete.

Joint Statement by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the United States
of America
November 17, 2006

President Nguyen Minh Triet of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was pleased to welcome United States President George W. Bush to Vietnam. Looking back on the June 2005 Joint Statement by President Bush and then Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, both leaders expressed satisfaction at the progress the bilateral relationship has made, resulting in a U.S.-Vietnam relationship today that is multi-faceted and forward looking. It encompasses significant and growing trade and economic ties, an emerging military-to-military relationship, successful cooperation on health and development issues, growing cultural and educational links, a commitment to resolving remaining issues stemming from the war, a shared interest in ensuring peace, stability, and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, and

frank and candid discussion of differences. The two sides reaffirmed their efforts to ensure that bilateral relations are stable, constructive, broad-based, and conducted on the basis of sovereign equality and mutual benefit.

President Triet and President Bush applauded the historic milestone of Vietnam's accession to the World Trade Organization and President Bush reiterated his firm support for the earliest possible Congressional approval of Permanent Normal Trade Relations. President Triet confirmed that Vietnam would fully uphold the rules-based trading system embedded in the WTO and join other members in their efforts to create a level playing field based on fairness, openness, and transparency. He welcomed President Bush's assurances that the United