

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Vice President Xi Jinping of China in Beijing

August 10, 2008

Vice President Xi. I very much welcome you, Mr. President, and your family members to Beijing for the opening ceremony and for the different events and for this visit to Beijing. To my knowledge—that you have a quite rich and full and interesting program here in Beijing, and I hope you like the program.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Vice President Xi. I'm very familiar with you, Mr. President, because you are always in the limelight of international media. [Laughter] And I'm very happy to have this opportunity to meet you and get acquainted with you.

President Bush. Thank you.

Vice President Xi. That's why the fact that you've come to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic games shows your support for the Chinese efforts to host this Olympiad, and it also shows your understanding and respect for the Chinese people to host these games.

The U.S. delegation is a very powerful and strong delegation, and you still have a overwhelming and very obvious edge in athletic sports. And I would like to wish American athletes every success and your good performance at the Beijing Olympic games.

President Bush. Thank you, sir.

Vice President Xi. Just now you had a friendly meeting with President Hu Jintao, and I know later on you are going to have a meeting with Premier Wen Jiabao. I'm very happy to have this opportunity to learn about your views and opinions.

President Bush. Thank you, sir. Well, thank you very much for your hospitality. We've just had a fabulous lunch, and I'm looking forward to this meeting as well.

I thank you for the warm hospitality. The opening day celebration was unbelievable. And I appreciate the beautiful venues, and I'm looking forward to seeing some of our teams compete.

So, we thank you very much, sir. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:48 p.m. in Building 202 at the Zhongnanhai. Vice President Xi referred to President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao of China. Vice President Xi spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Premier Wen Jiabao of China in Beijing

August 10, 2008

Premier Wen. Mr. President, welcome to Beijing. I also welcome your family members and other friends from the United States to the Beijing Olympic games.

I already learned that yesterday you went to see the American athletes in Beijing and you also watched a match played by the U.S. women's basketball team.

President Bush. Right.

Premier Wen. You also spent some time with the beach volleyball players. [Laughter]

I think this evening the match between the Chinese men's basketball team and the American men's basketball team will captivate the attention of people from all over the world.

President Bush. That's right.

Premier Wen. I'm very happy that you're going to watch the match.

President Bush. Yes, sir. I'm going with the Foreign Minister. [Laughter] He's going—he told me he's going to be yelling at the top of his lungs. [Laughter]

Thank you for your hospitality. It's been a wonderful experience being here. I didn't see if you were at the opening ceremonies.

Premier Wen. Yes, I was there.

President Bush. Well, it was fantastic—really well done. But thank you.

Premier Wen. Yes, the opening ceremony is spectacular.

President Bush. Unbelievable.

Premier Wen. When the U.S. team marched into the stadium, I saw that you put back your coat and your suit and then you stood up and cheered for your team.

President Bush. Yes, sir. I was proud to see them. But I bet you did the same thing when the Chinese team came. [Laughter]

Premier Wen. Yes, yes. I did the same.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:15 p.m. in Ziguanqge Hall at the Zhongnanhai. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Foreign Affairs Yang Jiechi of China. Premier Wen spoke in Chinese, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Interview With Bob Costas of NBC Sports in Beijing

August 11, 2008

2008 Beijing Olympics

Mr. Costas. All right, Al, we thank you. In a few minutes we'll have more of the women's team qualifying from Sunday afternoon here in Beijing. But now, live, we're joined by President George W. Bush, who has been at these games since the opening ceremony. You saw the opening ceremony. You've seen Michael Phelps and company at the pool. You went to beach volleyball, the USA's win over China in basketball last night. What are your impressions so far?

The President. First of all, I think the Chinese are being great hosts. The venues are fantastic. And our team's fired up, and so am I. I'm excited to be here. It's such a thrill to watch our men and women compete.

U.S. Olympic Men's Basketball Team

Mr. Costas. You met with the ballplayers before the basketball game last night.

The President. I did. [Laughter]

Mr. Costas. What was their response to you?

The President. Their response was—well, first of all, obviously these are great stars. And their response was, "Thanks for coming; we are really, really honored to represent America." And I was impressed by them. And of course, they go out and put on a great performance.

China-U.S. Relations

Mr. Costas. And winning 101 to 70. All right, our time here is limited. We'll get to as much as we can.

The President. Okay.

Mr. Costas. The opening ceremonies were glorious. There's much to admire about China's people, China's culture, and its

present accomplishments. But this remains an authoritarian state——

The President. That's true.

Mr. Costas. ——with an abysmal human rights record. In the long run, is China's rise irreconcilable with America's interests?

The President. No. In the long run, America better remain engaged with China and understand that we can have a cooperative and constructive, yet candid, relationship. It's really important for future Presidents to understand the relationship between China and the region, and it's important to make sure that America is engaged with China, even though we may have some disagreements.

China-U.S. Relations/U.S. Foreign Policy

Mr. Costas. You met with President Hu Jintao, not just at the opening ceremony——

The President. Right.

Mr. Costas. ——but privately since then. Did you press him on the full array of American concerns: human rights; press freedom; Tibet; China's support of rogue regimes like Sudan and Myanmar?

The President. Yes—and North Korea and Iran.

Mr. Costas. It was all on the table?

The President. Oh, absolutely, every time—every time. And you got to understand something, Bob, I don't need the Olympics to advance America's agenda. I've met with Hu Jintao a lot since I have been the President. And, yes, I had a full range—hey, listen, we agree with them on a lot of things, and we disagree with them on things. And that's the way the relationship is going to be. It needs to be, as I mentioned, constructive and cooperative.

U.S. Foreign Policy

Mr. Costas. This past week you restated America's fundamental differences with China.

The President. Yes.

Mr. Costas. But given China's growing strength and America's own problems, realistically how much leverage and influence does the U.S. have here?

The President. First of all, I don't see America having problems. I see America as a nation that is a world leader, that has got