

The President's News Conference With Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda of Japan

April 30, 2012

President Obama. Please be seated. Good afternoon, everybody. It is a great pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Noda of Japan, one of America's closest allies in the Asia-Pacific region, but also around the world. And of course, one of the reasons that we enjoy such a strong alliance between our nations is because it's rooted in the deep friendship between our peoples. I've felt it in my own life, during my visits to Japan, including as a young boy. And we've seen that friendship on display very profoundly over the past year.

Last month, we marked the first anniversary of the great east Japan earthquake and tsunami and nuclear crisis that followed. All across Japan, people stopped and stood in silence at 2:46 p.m., the moment that the Earth shook. Mr. Prime Minister, on behalf of the American people, I want to say to you and the people of Japan, we continue to stand with you as well.

We stand with Japan in honoring the lost and the missing: 19,000 men, women, and children who will never be forgotten. We stand with you as you rebuild, what you, Mr. Prime Minister, have called "the rebirth of Japan." And we stand with Japan—in the Asia-Pacific and beyond—because even as it has focused on the hard work at home, Japan has never stopped leading in the world. It is a great tribute to the Japanese people and to leaders like Prime Minister Noda.

I'm told that over the past year many Japanese have found strength in what they call *kizuna*: the bonds of solidarity between friends and neighbors, bonds which cannot be broken. Mr. Prime Minister, the same could be said of the bonds between the United States and Japan. And today we welcome you in that spirit.

As President, I've worked to strengthen the ties between our two nations since my first days in office. And when Prime Minister Noda and I first met last September, we agreed to modernize our alliance to meet the needs of the 21st century. And, Mr. Prime Minister, I want to thank you for the personal commitment that you've brought to this effort. You've called the alliance with the United States Japan's greatest asset. And in our work together, we've seen your trademark determination and humility.

In fact, during our discussions today, the Prime Minister compared his leadership style to that of a point guard in basketball; he may not be the flashiest player, but he stays focused and gets the job done. He's brought that same sense of teamwork to our partnership, and it's helped make this visit a milestone in the history of our alliance.

I'm proud to announce that we have agreed to a new joint vision to guide our alliance and help shape the Asia-Pacific for decades to come. This is part of the broader effort I discussed in Australia last year in which the United States is once again leading in the Asia-Pacific.

First, we recognize that the U.S.-Japan alliance will remain the foundation of the security and prosperity of our two nations, but also a cornerstone of regional peace and security. As such, we reviewed the agreement that our governments reached last week to realign American forces in Japan. This reflects our effort to modernize America's defense posture in the Asia-Pacific with forces that are more broadly distributed, more flexible, and more sustainable. At the same time, it will reduce the impact on local communities like Okinawa.

Second, our joint vision commits us to deepening our trade and investment. We're already among each other's top trading partners, and our exports to Japan and Japanese companies here in the U.S. support more than 1 million American jobs. But there's more we can do, especially as we work to double U.S. exports. So I appreciate the Prime Minister updating me on his reform efforts in Japan, including liberalizing trade and playing a leading role in Asia-Pacific's economy. We instructed our teams to continue our consultation regarding Japan's interest in joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which would benefit both our economies and the region. And we agreed to deepen our cooperation on nuclear safety, clean energy, and cybersecurity to enhance our economic competitiveness.

Third, our joint vision lays out the future we seek in the Asia-Pacific: a region where international rules and norms are upheld, where nations contribute to regional security, where commerce and freedom of navigation is not impeded, and where disputes are resolved peacefully. As such, we continue our close consultations on the provocative actions of North Korea, which are a sign of weakness and not strength and only serve to deepen Pyongyang's isolation. And we discussed the changes underway in Burma and how our two nations can both reward progress there while encouraging more reforms that improve the lives of the Burmese people.

Fourth, our joint vision reaffirms our role as global partners bound by shared values and committed to international peace, security, and human rights. For example, our nations are the largest donors in Afghanistan. As we plan for the NATO summit in Chicago and the next phase of the transition in Afghanistan, Japan is planning for a donor conference to sustain development there.

I also want to take this opportunity to commend the Prime Minister and Japan for showing such strong leadership with regard to Iran's nuclear program. The regime in Tehran is now feeling the economic screws tighten, and one of the reasons is that countries like Japan made the decision to reduce oil imports from Iran. This is just one more example of how, despite challenging times at home, Japan has continued to serve as a model and a true global leader.

Finally, our joint vision commits us to deepening the ties between our peoples. This includes new collaborations between our scientists, researchers, and entrepreneurs to foster innovation. And it includes new exchanges that will bring thousands of our young people together, including high school students, to help Japanese communities rebuild after last year's disasters.

So again, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you for helping to revitalize our extraordinary alliance so that we enjoy even greater security and prosperity for both our countries. And I once again want to salute the people of Japan for the strength and the resilience and the courage that they've shown during this past year. More than ever, the American people are proud to call you a friend and honored to call you an ally.

And before I turn it over to the Prime Minister, I just want to warn the American press that the Prime Minister once considered himself a journalist, and instead, he became a judo expert. He is a black belt. *[Laughter]* So if you get out of line—*[laughter]*—I've got some protection here. *[Laughter]*

Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Noda. Well, following President Obama forward, I, the point guard, Noda, will take up the microphone.

Now, this is the first visit to the United States by a Japanese Prime Minister in the context—the bilateral context since the change of Government took place in Japan. I wish to thank President Obama for the warm welcome and hospitality, as I know how busy he is with official duties.

I had a very good exchange of views with the President today on bilateral relations between Japan and the United States, the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, and various global challenges, among others. We were able to confirm from broader perspectives the present-day significance of the Japan-U.S. alliance and where the Japan-U.S. relations should be headed in the longer term.

The President just now spoke about his support, and I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you for all the unsparing support given by the Government and people of the United States, starting with Operation Tomodachi conducted by U.S. forces at the time of the great east Japan earthquake of last year.

Yesterday I met with the bereaved family—bereaved families of Taylor Anderson, who unfortunately passed away, but who took care of children until the very last moment following the great east Japan earthquake. I also met with representatives of the Fairfax County search and rescue team who, immediately following the earthquake, deployed in the disaster-affected region to help the people. So I was able to see—meet myself with these true friends of Japan.

Now, I have always held the conviction that our bilateral alliance is the linchpin of Japan's diplomacy. Having had conversations with U.S. friends yesterday, I renewed my conviction that that Japan-U.S. alliance must be unshakeable and in fact is unshakeable—

[At this point, the translation of the interpreter was inaudible. President Noda continued to speak in Japanese. The translation later continued, as follows.]

—In other words, major opportunities and challenges exist side by side in the region.

To cope with such conditions we are determined, as spelled out in the shared vision, to realize the new U.S. forces realignment plan in accordance with the Security Consultative Committee, or 2-plus-2, joint statement released the other day and to step up bilateral security and defense cooperation in a creative manner.

We also need to work with regional partners to build a multilayered network that is open, comprehensive, and building on international rules utilizing such frameworks as trilateral dialogues among Japan-U.S.-R.O.K. and Japan-U.S.-Australia, East Asia Summit, and APEC. From this point of view, we shall also cooperate with China, which is an important partner.

It is also important that Japan and the United States cooperate to promote necessary rules-making in the areas of nontraditional threats such as terrorism, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and piracy, as well as human security and peace-building and development assistance: ocean, space, and cyberspace.

In the economic area, we shall deepen bilateral economic ties and fortify the growth and prosperity of the two countries through their promotion of economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region. And to this end, both our countries will work on regional trade and investment rules-making, with a view to building FTAAP, or the free trade area of the Asia-Pacific. From this vantage point as well, we shall advance consultations with a view to participating in the Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations.

The shared vision also calls for the strengthening of energy cooperation. And we discussed in our meeting today expanding LNG exports from the United States to Japan.

Last, but not the least, as stated in the shared vision it is important to boost exchanges among next generation youth in the interest of the future of the Japan-U.S. alliance. We will further step up people-to-people exchanges among youth through such endeavors as Japan's Kizuna Project and U.S. Tomodachi Initiative.

Japan-U.S. alliance has reached new heights. Together with President Obama, I shall firmly advance these steps. I thank you.

President Obama. So we've got two questions on each side. We're going to start with Laura MacInnis of Reuters.

Chinese Activist Chen Guangcheng/Human Rights/North Korea

Q. President Obama, could you confirm whether the blind Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng is under U.S. protection in Beijing? And how do you foresee that situation being resolved? Would the United States grant him asylum if he asked for it?

And, Prime Minister Noda, how likely do you think it is that North Korea will carry out a third nuclear test? How would Japan respond to such a test? And what would you like the U.S. to do to respond?

President Obama. Obviously, I'm aware of the press reports on the situation in China, but I'm not going to make a statement on the issue. What I would like to emphasize is that every time we meet with China, the issue of human rights comes up. It is our belief that not only is that the right thing to do because it comports with our principles and our belief in freedom and human rights, but also because we actually think China will be stronger as it opens up and liberalizes its own system.

We want China to be strong, and we want it to be prosperous. And we're very pleased with all the areas of cooperation that we've been able to engage in. But we also believe that that relationship will be that much stronger and China will be that much more prosperous and strong as you see improvements on human rights issues in that country.

I know it wasn't directed at me, but I'll just make a quick statement around North Korea. This was a topic of extensive discussion between myself and Prime Minister Noda. Our consultation throughout the failed missile launch was, I think, reflective of how important our alliance is not just to our two countries, but to the region as a whole. And what I've tried to do since I came into office is to make sure that the North Koreans understand that the old pattern of provocation that then gets attention and somehow insists on the world purchasing good behavior from them, that that pattern is broken.

And what we've said is, is that the more you engage in provocative acts, the more isolated you will become, the stronger sanctions will be in place, the more isolated you will be diplomatically, politically, and commercially. And so although we can't anticipate—and I don't want to hypothesize on what might happen in the coming months—I think Pyongyang is very clear that the United States, Japan, South Korea, other countries in the region are unified in insisting that it abide by its responsibilities, abide by international norms, and that they will not be able to purchase anything from further provocative acts.

Prime Minister Noda. With regard to North Korea, between myself and President Obama earlier we—with regard to the so-called launch of satellite—the missile launch—we share the

view that it undermines the efforts of the various countries concerned to achieve resolution through dialogue.

Now, in the latest round of missile launch, they also conducted a nuclear test, which means that there is a great possibility they will conduct a nuclear test. And I believe the international community as a whole, together, will need to call for restraint on the part of DPRK. And more specifically, I believe the measures incorporated in the recent U.N. Security Council chairman's statement need to be complied with. And among Japan, the U.S., and Korea, as well as China and Russia, we need to communicate with each other fully and also call—stress that China's role continues to be very important and cooperate with China while also maintaining close coordination with the United States. And we shared this view with President Obama.

And let me ask Mr. Imaichi of TBS, from Japan, to ask a question.

U.S. Military Installations in Japan

Q. Imaichi of TBS Television, and I have a question for both President Obama and Prime Minister Noda. How do you regard the Futenma relocation issue in the context of this joint statement, although you did not refer specifically to Futenma relocation? And the interim report on U.S. Forces Japan realignment leaves this question open to some extent. And what do you think of the possibility that Futenma Air Station ultimately will be relocated to a place other than Henoko as agreed between Japan and the United States?

Prime Minister Noda. Now, it is most meaningful that in the 2-plus-2 joint statement, as well as the summit meeting today, that we were able to confirm that our two countries will cooperate in the context of a deepening bilateral alliance towards the realization of the optimum U.S. force posture in the region and the reduction of burden on Okinawa, and we'll continue to work for an early resolution of this issue by taking into account the development of the—[inaudible]—date.

President Obama. The realignment approach that's being taken is consistent with the security interests of both Japan and the United States. We think we've found an effective mechanism to move this process forward in a way that is respectful of the situation in Okinawa, the views of residents there, but also is able to optimize the defense cooperation between our two countries and the alliance that's the linchpin not just of our own security but also security in the region as a whole.

So we're confident that we can move forward with an approach that realigns our base posture or our deployments, but also is continuing to serve the broad-based interests of our alliance as a whole.

And I want to thank publicly Prime Minister Noda for having taken such a constructive approach to an issue that has been lingering in our bilateral relationship for quite some time.

President Obama. Christi Parson [Chicago Tribune].

Counterterrorism Efforts

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. We're coming up on the 1-year anniversary of the killing of bin Laden. I wonder if you would share some thoughts on that anniversary. And I also wanted to mention that your likely opponent says, "Anybody would have made that call, even Jimmy Carter." So I'm curious to see what you would say about that.

And, Mr. Prime Minister, if I may, on the same topic, you mentioned the international fight against terrorism in your opening remarks, and I wonder if you could reflect on President Obama's record here and if you think from an international perspective the U.S. is playing it right in marking this anniversary? Or if you think it—you might advise against excessive celebration?

President Obama. Well, let me make a couple of points. First of all, Christi, I hardly think that you've seen any excessive celebration taking place here. I think that people—the American people rightly remember what we as a country accomplished in bringing to justice somebody who killed over 3,000 of our citizens. And it's a mark of the excellence of our intelligence teams and our military teams, a political process that worked. And I think for us to use that time for some reflection to give thanks to those who participated is entirely appropriate, and that's what's been taking place.

As far as my personal role and what other folks would do, I'd just recommend that everybody take a look at people's previous statements in terms of whether they thought it was appropriate to go into Pakistan and take out bin Laden. I assume that people meant what they said when they said it. That's been at least my practice. I said that I'd go after bin Laden if we had a clear shot at him, and I did.

If there are others who have said one thing and now suggest they'd do something else, then I'd go ahead and let them explain it.

Prime Minister Noda. President Obama has been standing at the very forefront in the fight against terrorism, and I hold him in very high regard for that.

Now, although bin Laden has been killed, terrorism has not been rooted out, and I think continued efforts will be needed in cooperation with the United States. We also would like to continue all our efforts against terrorism. I think the forms of terrorism are being very diverse, amongst them, cyber terrorism, for example. This—[inaudible]—between Japan and the United States not just in the cyber—in the space and ocean, but we also decided to cooperate in cybersecurity as well. So inclusive of all these, Japan and the United States shall work together to root out terrorism of all sorts.

Let me call on Takatsuka-san of Mainichi Shimbun.

China

Q. I'm Takatsuka with Mainichi Shimbun newspaper, and I would like to ask a question for Prime Minister Noda and President Obama.

There's no direct reference to China in this joint statement. What sort of exchange of views did you have on China in the context of working for stability in the Asia-Pacific connected with their advances in the oceans and also their military buildup? I wonder what sort of interlocution you had on the subject.

Prime Minister Noda. Let me answer first. As you correctly pointed out, the shared vision does not refer to any specific country, but we recognize China as a major partner in the region. And in our exchange of views, both of us, in fact, confirmed that viewpoint. China's development is an opportunity for the international community, for Japan, and for the Asia-Pacific.

Now, I explained in the meeting to President Obama that when I visited China last December, I broached to the Chinese leaders my six-point initiative, including confidence-

building and cooperation in the East China Sea in order to further advance our mutually beneficial relationship based on common strategic interests, and that I'll work steadily to implement this.

I also told to the President that I wish to realize his strategic dialogue among Japan, U.S., and China. Now, EAS last year, we—where the view that was a success—and of course, ASEAN countries also participated in discussions that we need to seek a rules-based response for behavior from the Chinese. And we had these exchange of views.

President Obama. I think that I've said in the past and firmly believe that we welcome a peacefully rising China. And we have developed a very important strategic and economic dialogue with China. We think what they've accomplished in terms of lifting millions of people out of poverty is good for its own sake and it's also potentially good for the world and for the region.

As Prime Minister Noda and I noted, we do believe that as China continues to grow, as its influence continues to expand, that it has to be a strong partner in abiding by international rules and norms, whether those are economic norms like respecting intellectual property, whether these are norms of dispute resolution.

So in maritime disputes, ensuring that small countries and large countries are both respected in international fora in resolving these issues; that across the board, we want China to be a partner with us in a set of international rules and norms that everybody follows. And I think as China makes that transition from a developing country into a major power, that it will see that over the long term it is in its interest as well to abide by these rules and norms.

And so all of our actions are not designed to in any way contain China, but they are designed to ensure that they are part of a broader international community in which rules, norms are respected, in which all countries can prosper and succeed.

Thank you very much, everybody.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 2:16 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, Prime Minister Noda referred to Andy and Jeanne Anderson, parents, and Julia Anderson, sister, of Taylor Anderson, who died in Ishinomaki, Japan, in March 2011; David Barlow, captain, Keith Johnson, deputy chief, and Jennifer Massey, K-9 handler, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department; and U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Susan E. Rice, in her capacity as president of the U.N. Security Council. Prime Minister Noda and two reporters spoke in Japanese, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: Japan, Prime Minister Noda.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Noda, Yoshihiko.

Subjects: Burma : Democracy efforts; China : Economic growth and development; China : Human rights issues; China : Relations with U.S.; China : Strategic and Economic Dialogue, U.S.-China; Commerce, international : U.S. exports :: Expansion; Education : Foreign exchange programs; Iran : International and U.S. sanctions; Iran : Nuclear weapons development; Japan : Afghanistan, role; Japan : Cybersecurity efforts, cooperation with U.S.;

Japan : Defense relationship with U.S.; Japan : Earthquake and tsunami, damage and recovery efforts; Japan : Energy cooperation with U.S.; Japan : Nuclear energy, cooperation with U.S.; Japan : Nuclear power plants in Fukushima; Japan : Prime Minister; Japan : Relations with U.S.; Japan : Student exchanges with U.S.; Japan : Trade with U.S.; Japan : Trans-Pacific Partnership, membership bid; Natural disasters : Japan, earthquake and tsunami; North Korea : Ballistic missile testing; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; Terrorism : Counterterrorism efforts; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

DCPD Number: DCPD201200320.