

But as I told General Thurman and your commander here, you guys are the—at freedom's frontier. When you think about the transformation that has taken place in South Korea during my lifetime, it is directly attributed to this long line of soldiers, sailors, airmen, marines, coastguardsmen who were willing to create the space and the opportunity for freedom and prosperity. And the contrast between South Korea and North Korea could not be clearer, could not be starker, both in terms of freedom, but also in terms of prosperity.

And the reason that the South is doing so well is obviously attributable to the incredible resilience of their people and their incredible talents and hard work, but it also has to do with you guys. And so my main message is the same obviously to every base that I go to all across—all around the world, which is, I could not be prouder of what you're doing. Everybody back home could not be prouder of what you guys do each and every day: the dedication, the professionalism that you show. But there's something about this spot in particular, where there's such a clear line and there's such an obvious impact that you have for the good each and every day that should make all of you proud.

And I'll just share with you real briefly, last time I was here, I was having lunch with the President of South Korea, President Lee. And he talked about how he was a small child when

the Korean war was taking place and its aftermath, and the brutal poverty, the fact that they had nothing. And he went on to be a auto executive and ultimately the President of his country and watch it grow. And he specifically said to me—and this was a private moment, he didn't say this in front of the press, so you knew he meant it—he said, the only reason that was able to happen—and I still think back to all those American soldiers and the sacrifices that they made.

That's the legacy you're carrying on here. So we're grateful to you. We're proud of you. And I hope that all your family back home knows how proud your Commander in Chief is of you.

And the only other thing I'll say is, for those of you guys who missed the ball games—*[laughter]*—Florida got beat by Louisville, and Ohio State just beat Syracuse. So I don't know how your brackets are doing. *[Laughter]*

But anyway, thank you, God bless you, and let me just shake some hands and take some pictures. All right.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gen. James D. Thurman, USA, commander, United Nations Command, Combined Forces Command, U.S. Forces Korea; and Col. Patrick McKenzie, USAF, commander, 51st Fighter Wing.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey in Seoul, South Korea March 25, 2012

President Obama. I just want to say how much I appreciate the opportunity to once again meet with my friend and colleague, Prime Minister Erdogan. I think it's fair to say that over the last several years, the relationship between Turkey and the United States has continued to grow across every dimension. And I find Prime Minister Erdogan to be an outstanding partner and an outstanding friend on a wide range of issues.

We devoted a lot of this meeting to the issue of Syria, where the United States and Turkey have worked with a broad-based coalition: an international coalition of countries in the region, as well as around the world, who deeply object to the killings that have been taking place in Syria and are absolutely committed to trying to help those innocent civilians who are being killed by the Asad regime. And we are very much in agreement that there should be a process whereby a transition to a representa-

tive and legitimate government in Syria takes place.

So I expressed my thanks for Turkey hosting the next Friends of Syria meeting. And we worked on a common agenda, in terms of how we can support both humanitarian efforts, political efforts—the efforts of Kofi Annan—to bring about much-needed change inside of Syria. And not only Prime Minister Erdogan, but his entire team has shown outstanding leadership on this critical issue.

We also had the opportunity to discuss the issue of Iran and its nuclear program. I emphasized to the Prime Minister once again that I believe there is a window of time to resolve this question diplomatically, but that window is closing. And it's absolutely critical for us to be able to move forward in an effective way, in a serious way, in concert based on negotiations through the P-5-plus-1 and other channels, to ensure that Iran abides by its international obligations, which also then confers upon it the right to engage in peaceful nuclear power. And I very much appreciate the Prime Minister's insights, obviously, as a neighbor of Iran and as someone who is interested in seeing this issue resolved in a peaceful fashion.

Beyond those two specific issues, we had a wide-ranging conversation about our continued support of counterterrorism efforts, including the efforts that are taking place in Turkey with respect to the PKK. And we are very supportive of making sure that the kinds of terrorist attacks that we've seen in the past are not occurring. I congratulated the Prime Minister on the efforts that he's made within Turkey to protect religious minorities. I was pleased to hear of his decision to reopen the Halki Seminary.

We discussed our joint NATO efforts, and I look forward to welcoming him to my hometown of Chicago to discuss the transition process in Afghanistan, to provide support for an effort within Afghanistan so that they can provide for their own security and a stable Government that's representative of its people and providing them with opportunity and prosperity.

And we discussed some of the important humanitarian efforts that are being made jointly in places like Somalia.

So the bottom line is that we have found ourselves in frequent agreement upon a wide range of issues. Our discussions are frank and honest, and I very much appreciate our collaboration. And I also appreciate the advice he gives me, because he has two daughters that are a little older than mine; they've turned out very well, so I'm always interested in his perspective on raising girls.

Prime Minister Erdogan. My dear friend, Barack, thank you very much for a very fruitful meeting today. The first topic that we discussed was Syria. We extensively evaluated the situation in Syria. Of course, for a country like Turkey, which has a border of 910 kilometers with Syria, the events that are taking place in Syria is very close to us, and we feel it in our hearts, and we're very sorry to see some of the developments.

Our country has become a center of migration; we have more than 17,000 people who have had to come over from the Syrian side to Turkey as a result of the events in Syria. And we also see significant number of people who are killed, and there seems to be continuous action in terms of bombing and burning cities and settlement areas by headquarters and the need to do more of this.

And of course, as human beings, people with conscience, we cannot remain a spectator to these developments, which are things that we have to be doing something about within the framework of international law. And I'm also very pleased to see that our views in general very much overlap on this subject.

We've also had an opportunity to talk about, with respect to Syria again, developments in the region: Iran, Russia, and China, in that context.

On my return from South Korea, I will be visiting Iran, specifically on the issue of Syria. And I was hoping that we would have a chance to discuss that aspect as well, which we did today.

And there are also developments in Iraq, which was—which were important, which we wanted to discuss, and those have also been discussed in our meeting. We discussed about developments in Iraq to see how we can create

greater impetus towards greater peace in Iraq. And I'm hoping that all efforts will in the end help contribute to greater peace in Iraq.

We're also very pleased to see the United States standing with us in our fight against the separatist terrorist organization. Our fight against the separatist terrorist organization will continue, but we also have to continue to have discussions with the political extensions of this organization.

We also had a chance to evaluate the situation with respect to Cyprus. Our hope is that we can achieve the desired future for Cyprus sooner.

A very, very important point has been that from the moment Barack became President, we upgraded the status of our relations from a strategic partnership to a model partnership, which he also placed a lot of importance on.

And as a result of the steps we have taken within the context of this model partnership, our trade in 2011 reached \$20 billion.

A second meeting, after the first one that was held in Washington, will be held in Turkey in June this year to talk about those relations, which, in turn, in my opinion, will also lead to a significant increase once again for our relations.

And I also told you about my—[inaudible].

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:49 p.m. at the Grand Hyatt Seoul hotel. In his remarks, he referred to President Bashar al-Asad of Syria; former Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan of the United Nations, in his capacity as Joint U.N.-Arab League Special Envoy for Syria; and Esra and Sumeyye Erdogan, daughters of Prime Minister Erdogan. He also referred to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Prime Minister Erdogan spoke in Turkish, and his remarks were translated by an interpreter.

The President's News Conference With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in Seoul

March 25, 2012

President Lee. I apologize for running a little late, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. President, distinguished members of the press, it's good to see my good friend again. The last time we met was 4 months ago. Welcome to Korea, Mr. President.

And I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for taking time to visit the DMZ early this morning, soon after your arrival in Seoul. Mr. President, I'm sure it was a chance to witness firsthand the reality of division that has been a part of Korea for such a long time. And I gather you had a good time meeting with the members of the armed forces from both Korea and the United States. And thank you for the encouragement that you gave these men and women in uniform.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we had a very useful and constructive discussion on a wide array of issues, from North Korea's nuclear and missile development and including other security issues, and also how to promote bilateral

trade between our two countries, and of course, other topics of mutual interest.

And we talked about the security situation in the region and the situation on the Korean Peninsula and agreed to continue working closely together in implementing our North Korea policy. Both countries agreed that North Korea's announcement to test-fire its long-range missile is a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions, not to mention the latest agreement between the U.S. and North Korea. Therefore, President Obama and I both agreed that North Korea must immediately repeal its decision and abide by its international obligations.

President Obama and I agreed that we will continue to enhance and strengthen our combined defense capabilities and, at the same time, firmly respond to any threats or provocations from the North. If North Korea gives up its pursuit of nuclear weapons and missile development and instead chooses a path towards