

Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat of Thailand

September 19, 2005

President Bush. It's been my honor to welcome the Prime Minister of Thailand back to the—to Washington. Thank you for coming, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Thaksin. Thank you.

President Bush. Laura and I were just talking the other evening about what a wonderful visit we had to your country when you hosted APEC. It's reminded me—when I was thinking about that visit, reminded me of our close friendship. The Prime Minister is a person who believes in markets and free enterprise and freedom. And I'm really, really pleased he's here.

We had a—we talked about a lot of subjects. One subject that I'm particularly interested in is avian flu and the need for our countries to work together. Thailand is a leader in putting systems in place that will track the virus as it attacks different birds and watches very carefully to make sure that there's no bird-to-human transmission in his country. He's willing to work in the neighborhood, for which I'm grateful. All of us need to be mindful of this potentially devastating disease. And we've got a good friend and a very thoughtful leader when it comes to that subject.

We talked about North Korea. We talked about the neighborhood. We talked about our economies. We would like to get a free trade agreement concluded here as quickly as possible, and the Prime Minister made that very clear to me.

All in all, it was a very good visit, covering a lot of subjects, and I'm not surprised, because I'm visiting with a good friend.

So, welcome, Mr. Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Thaksin. Thank you, Mr. President. It's my pleasure to visit Washington, DC, again. It's my third time during Prime Ministership—and this trip I have been—discussed with the President about the bilateral and also the regional—in Asia as well. And we had a very good conversation.

I committed to President Bush that we are pressing ahead with the FTA, and also we will work closely with U.S. by drafting the

plan of action in the cooperation between our two countries and also with the third country as well if the two countries would like to work together with, in helping or in working with other countries.

I also want to welcome the President to meet with the ASEAN seven during APEC meeting in November in Korea.

President Bush. Finally, I do want to thank the Prime Minister and His Majesty for sending relief supplies to our folks that have been affected by Hurricane Katrina. This good country has just come through a tsunami, and they're on their way to recovery. And yet they were able to, through their—because of their generous hearts, ship help. And so thanks very much, and please thank His Majesty for his generous contribution to the folks down there.

Thank you, sir. Appreciate it. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:52 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to King Phumiphon Adunyadet of Thailand.

Joint Statement by President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat of Thailand

September 19, 2005

President George W. Bush and Prime Minister Thaksin Chinnawat met today to reaffirm the strength of the U.S.-Thai alliance and the importance of bilateral cooperation in regional and global affairs. Both leaders recognized the special and enduring bonds between the two countries as well as between the American and Thai people, demonstrated most recently by the close cooperation following last December's devastating tsunami and after Hurricane Katrina. President Bush expressed his admiration for the resilience and determination of the Thai people and government in rebuilding areas affected by the tsunami and pledged continued U.S. assistance. The President noted Thailand's effort to mobilize support for an establishment of a regional tsunami early warning system.

Prime Minister Thaksin once again expressed his profound condolences for American casualties and the devastation from Hurricane Katrina. President Bush expressed his