

JAPAN NATIONAL PRESS CLUB
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I AM PLEASED TO HAVE THIS CHANCE ONCE AGAIN TO SPEAK BEFORE THIS PRESTIGIOUS FORUM. I VALUE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH SOME OF JAPAN'S MOST INFLUENTIAL JOURNALISTS ABOUT MATTERS OF CENTRAL INTEREST THAT BRING OUR TWO NATIONS TOGETHER.

A LITTLE OVER A MONTH AGO PRESIDENT CLINTON'S STATE VISIT MARKED ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE POST WAR U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP. WE ARE PARTICULARLY GRATEFUL FOR THE WARMTH AND GENEROSITY SHOWN TO THE PRESIDENT AND HIS DELEGATION BY THEIR IMPERIAL MAJESTIES.

I BELIEVE THAT THE VISIT WAS ONE OF THE MOST SUCCESSFUL EVER. THAT CONCLUSION IS BASED ON A WIDE RANGE OF IMPORTANT STEPS PRESIDENT CLINTON AND PRIME MINISTER HASHIMOTO TOOK TO STRENGTHEN OUR RELATIONSHIP ACROSS THE BROAD SPECTRUM OF ISSUES THAT BUILD FIRM BILATERAL TIES -- IN SECURITY, TRADE, POLITICAL, DEVELOPMENT, AND IN EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL AREAS.

THESE MEASURES ARE WELL KNOWN TO YOU, BUT THEY ARE WORTH REPEATING:

ONE -- SECURITY. OUR LEADERS STRONGLY REAFFIRMED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SECURITY RELATIONSHIP, SPECIFICALLY ENDORSING THE MAINTENANCE OF AMERICAN FORCES AT THEIR CURRENT LEVEL, TAKING FUNDAMENTAL MEASURES TO REDUCE IRRITANTS AND THE AMOUNT OF LAND USED IN OKINAWA, AND AGREEING TO UPDATE THE GUIDELINES FOR U.S.-JAPAN COOPERATION TO BETTER COPE WITH SECURITY RISKS.

TWO -- TRADE. OUR LEADERS REAFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE BILATERAL ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT REACHED IN 1993 TO RESOLVE U.S.-JAPAN TRADE DIFFERENCES AND DECLARED THEIR GOAL "... SUBSTANTIALLY TO INCREASE ACCESS AND SALES OF COMPETITIVE FOREIGN GOODS AND SERVICES THROUGH MARKET OPENINGS AND MACROECONOMIC MEASURES." THEY ALSO REAFFIRMED OUR MUTUAL SUPPORT FOR APEC.

THREE -- POLITICAL. PRESIDENT CLINTON AND PRIME MINISTER HASHIMOTO ALSO REAFFIRMED OUR COOPERATION ACROSS A WIDE RANGE OF POLITICAL ISSUES, INCLUDING THE KEDO EFFORT TO DISCOURAGE NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA, EFFORTS TO SEEK PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND ELSEWHERE, SUPPORT FOR JAPAN'S MEMBERSHIP ON THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL, AND EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE THE UNITED NATIONS.

FOUR -- COMMON AGENDA. THE PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER REAFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE ROBUST AND DYNAMIC RANGE OF COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS KNOWN AS THE COMMON AGENDA, BY WHICH OUR NATIONS WORK TOGETHER WITH THIRD COUNTRIES TO TACKLE HEALTH (AIDS), ENVIRONMENTAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND OTHER PROBLEMS. OUR LEADERS AGREED TO ADD EFFORTS TO COUNTER TERRORISM TO AN ALREADY EXTENSIVE LIST OF JOINT INITIATIVES.

FIVE -- EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES. OUR LEADERS ENDORSED EFFORTS TO EXPAND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR STUDENTS IN EACH OTHER'S COUNTRIES, WHICH AS YOU KNOW, I SEE AS PARTICULARLY VITAL TO IMPROVING BILATERAL UNDERSTANDING.

THIS IS A BRIEF SUMMARY OF A MUCH LONGER LIST OF COOPERATIVE UNDERTAKINGS BY OUR GOVERNMENTS. IN TOTAL, THEY REFLECT THE GROWING DYNAMISM OF OUR JOINT EFFORTS, THE BROADENING OF OUR SHARED VISION, AND THE ENHANCED VALUE THAT EACH NATION ASSIGNS TO OUR CAPACITY TO SERVE THE CAUSE OF PEACE, STABILITY, ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, AND THE ENRICHMENT OF OUR CULTURAL CONNECTIONS.

ONE CANNOT READ THIS LONG LIST WITHOUT REALIZING THE MANY BENEFITS THAT FLOW TO OUR PEOPLE AND TO THE WORLD FROM A HEALTHY U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP.

X--X--X

AS WE MEET TODAY, ON THE HEELS OF THIS SUCCESSFUL SUMMIT, THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE AMERICAN - JAPANESE RELATIONSHIP IS SOLID, PRODUCTIVE AND HEALTHY. THE WORLD COULD NOT HAVE BETTER NEWS THAN THAT.

BUT JUST AS THE PREPARATIONS FOR THIS REMARKABLE SUMMIT REQUIRED THE CLOSEST COOPERATION TO ENSURE SUCH PROGRESS, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF OUR GOALS ALSO DEMANDS A

CONSTANT AND CAREFUL MANAGEMENT OF THESE EFFORTS. WE MUST CAPTURE THE SPIRIT OF THIS SUMMIT, BUILD ON THE PROGRESS THAT WAS MADE, AND REALIZE MORE FULLY THE BENEFITS WHICH WILL FLOW FROM STRONG BILATERAL TIES INTO THE NEXT CENTURY.

(SECURITY) IN THE SECURITY FIELD, OUR LEADERS' AGREEMENT REQUIRES US TO IMPLEMENT THE SPECIAL ACTION COMMITTEE'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OKINAWA. WE HAVE DONE MORE SERIOUS WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE OUR PRESENCE COMPATIBLE WITH AND ACCEPTABLE TO OUR OKINAWAN NEIGHBORS OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS THAN WAS DONE OVER THE LAST TWENTY YEARS. I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THIS PROCESS WITH AN ENHANCED RESPECT FOR OUR NATIONS' CAPACITY TO WORK ON THE SAME SIDE OF THE TABLE. WE HAVE TAKEN THESE BOLD STEPS WHILE FULLY SUSTAINING OUR FORCE READINESS. NOW WE MUST PREPARE THE FINAL SACO REPORT BY NOVEMBER, AND MOVE TO THE ALL-IMPORTANT BUT DIFFICULT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE OF THE AGREEMENT.

WE MUST ALSO BEGIN CAREFUL DISCUSSIONS TO UPDATE THE 1978 GUIDELINES COVERING U.S.-JAPAN SECURITY COOPERATION. I WOULD LIKE TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT WE SEE THIS EFFORT AS REQUIRING CAREFUL AND PATIENT CONSIDERATION. IT WILL TAKE TIME.

WE ASSUME, MOREOVER, THAT THESE DELIBERATIONS WILL BE BASED ON JAPAN'S CONSTITUTION AS WELL AS ITS CURRENT DEFENSE POLICY. THESE ARE ISSUES FOR JAPAN TO DECIDE, NOT THE UNITED STATES. OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH JAPAN WILL BE MEASURED AND PRUDENT AND WILL FLOW FROM A MUTUAL DESIRE TO ENHANCE OUR SECURITY COOPERATION IN THE CASE OF A THREAT.

WE ARE NOT PREMISING OUR ALLIANCE ON A PARTICULAR THREAT. AS SECRETARY PERRY SAID, OUR ALLIANCE IS BASED ON COMMON INTERESTS, NOT COMMON ENEMIES. THE ALLIANCE IS ESSENTIAL TO SUSTAIN THE STABILITY AND PEACE WHICH ARE THE UNDERPINNING FOR THE REMARKABLE ECONOMIC PROGRESS ENJOYED THROUGHOUT ASIA.

TO ENSURE THE CONTINUED HEALTH OF THE ALLIANCE, BOTH COUNTRIES HAVE TAKEN OTHER IMPORTANT STEPS OVER THE LAST YEAR. JAPAN EXTENDED ITS CRUCIAL HOST NATION SUPPORT FOR ANOTHER FIVE YEARS, A PROGRAM THAT PROVIDES IMPORTANT FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR U.S. FORCES IN JAPAN AND SERVES AS A

SYMBOL OF JAPAN'S COMMITMENT TO THE ALLIANCE. JAPAN ALSO EMPHASIZED THE KEY ROLE OF THE ALLIANCE IN ITS NATIONAL DEFENSE PROGRAM OUTLINE ISSUED IN NOVEMBER. THE UNITED STATES HAD EARLIER ISSUED ITS EAST ASIA STRATEGY REPORT PLEDGING ITS CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO THE DEFENSE OF JAPAN, AND IN SUPPORT OF STABILITY IN THIS REGION. IN APRIL, OUR NATIONS ALSO SIGNED A NEW ACQUISITION AND CROSS SERVICING AGREEMENT TO INCREASE OPERATIONAL COOPERATION. THESE MEASURES AND THOSE TAKEN AT THE SUMMIT INVOLVE NOTHING LESS THAN THE REAFFIRMATION OF OUR SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WELL INTO THE 21st CENTURY.

(TRADE) THIS SPIRIT OF COOPERATION IS ALSO CRUCIAL FOR OUR TALKS ON TRADE. WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS. FOREIGN IMPORTS INTO JAPAN HAVE INCREASED, AND THE CURRENT ACCOUNT IMBALANCE IS STARTING TO TREND DOWN. WE WELCOME THIS VERY POSITIVE NEWS. NEVERTHELESS, MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE ON OUR PRIMARY CONCERNS ABOUT FOREIGN ACCESS TO THIS, THE WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST ECONOMY. OUR TWO NATIONS MUST IMPLEMENT THE MANY AGREEMENTS WE HAVE REACHED. WE MUST MONITOR PROGRESS IN EACH AREA AND WILLINGLY DISCUSS NEW ISSUES AS THEY ARISE. IN ALL OF THIS, WE MUST ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF A MORE OPEN JAPANESE ECONOMY.

CONTRARY TO SOME REPORTS, THE UNITED STATES HAS NOT WEAKENED IN ITS COMMITMENT TO FURTHER IMPORTANT PROGRESS IN THE TRADE ARENA. CANDOR REQUIRES ME TO SAY THAT TRADE ISSUES STILL PUT THE GREATEST STRAIN ON OUR RELATIONSHIP.

DESPITE THE PROGRESS THAT HAS BEEN MADE IN RECENT YEARS, JAPAN'S ECONOMY REMAINS TOO CLOSED, TOO OVER-REGULATED, AND TOO SLOW TO CHANGE. THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT THAT OUR LEADERS AGAIN AFFIRMED CALLS FOR BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS TO CORRECT IMBALANCES -- FULLY CONSISTENT WITH THE OPEN MARKET TRADING PRINCIPLES OF THE WORLD TRADE ORGANIZATION. OUR DISCUSSIONS WILL ALSO CONTINUE IN GLOBAL AND REGIONAL FORA. WHILE THE UNITED STATES ENJOYS A STRONG POSITION IN ALMOST EVERY OPEN ECONOMY IN THE WORLD, IN JAPAN WE ALONG WITH OTHER COUNTRIES STILL SUFFER FROM SERIOUS BARRIERS TO MARKET ACCESS AND FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT. THIS IS NOT HEALTHY FOR EITHER NATION, OR FOR THE WORLD TRADING COMMUNITY.

IF WE COULD ONLY ESTABLISH THE SAME KIND OF RESPECTFUL COOPERATION IN TRADE THAT WE ENJOY IN ALL OTHER AREAS OF U.S.-JAPAN INTERACTION, I AM SURE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS WOULD BE MADE AND JAPAN WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY. WHERE JAPAN HAS OPENED ITS MARKETS, JAPANESE HAVE BEEN BENEFICIARIES.

WE NEED TO DO A BETTER JOB OF SOLVING TRADE ISSUES BEFORE THEY BECOME POLITICAL PROBLEMS. WE MUST SIT DOWN TOGETHER TO WORK THEM OUT THROUGH CONSTANT DIALOGUE, RESTRAINED RHETORIC, AND A BROAD AND LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE THAT LOOKS BEYOND INTEREST GROUPS AND SHORT-TERM ADVANTAGE.

(CULTURAL EXCHANGES) LET ME CLOSE BY MENTIONING EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES. YOU HAVE OFTEN HEARD ME TALK ABOUT THIS. THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN ARE THE TWO LARGEST ECONOMIES IN THE WORLD. WE ARE BOTH DEMOCRACIES. WE ENJOY BROAD AGREEMENT ON THE GOALS OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD AND WE WORK TOGETHER VERY EFFECTIVELY TOWARD THOSE ENDS. AND THE WHOLE WORLD BENEFITS. MIKE MANSFIELD'S FAMOUS QUOTE THAT THE U.S.-JAPAN RELATIONSHIP IS THE MOST IMPORTANT IN THE WORLD -- "BAR NONE" -- IS SURELY EVEN MORE TRUE TODAY.

I WAS THEREFORE PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE PROGRESS OUR LEADERS MADE AT THE SUMMIT TO INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES FOR OUR PEOPLES TO UNDERSTAND MORE ABOUT EACH OTHER. I APPLAUD THE NEW JAPANESE PROGRAMS TO INCREASE THE NUMBERS OF AMERICAN HIGH SCHOOL AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS STUDYING HERE, AND SEPARATE INITIATIVES TO BRING TEACHERS, SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, ARTISTS AND OTHERS TO JAPAN. JAPAN HAS ALSO INCREASED ITS SUPPORT FOR SCIENTISTS STUDYING IN JAPAN. THIS IS VERY HEARTENING. FOR AMERICA'S PART, WE CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN THE WIDEST POSSIBLE OPEN DOOR TO FOREIGN STUDENTS, AND WE ARE VERY PLEASED BY THE FACT THAT JAPANESE COMPRISE THE LARGEST CONTINGENT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS ON OUR CAMPUSES. (JAPANESE RECENTLY PASSED CHINA.)

NEVERTHELESS, BECAUSE OUR TWO SOCIETIES DIFFER IN MANY RESPECTS, WE MUST DO A BETTER JOB OF LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER. ONLY FROM SUCH INTERCHANGE CAN COME THE KNOWLEDGE, RESPECT AND EMPATHY SO ESSENTIAL TO A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP. WHILE THE JET PROGRAM (ONE OF THE BEST FROM OUR STANDPOINT) AND OTHERS HELP MANY YOUNG AMERICANS EXPERIENCE JAPAN

FIRSTHAND, IT CONCERNS ME THAT STILL TOO FEW AMERICANS ARE STUDYING, TEACHING, AND WORKING HERE. I FIND THAT FACT NOT ONLY UNFORTUNATE, BUT DANGEROUS, AND I AM GLAD TO SEE A GROWING APPRECIATION OF IT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PACIFIC. I HOPE WE CAN KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM STARTED BY OUR TWO LEADERS IN APRIL.

X--X--X (ACTUAL SPEECH ENDED HERE...)

I HAVE TRIED TO RECAP BRIEFLY THE THEMES THAT PRESIDENT CLINTON AND PRIME MINISTER HASHIMOTO STRESSED IN THEIR RECENT SUMMIT. WHEN I MEET WITH U.S. VISITORS, THESE ARE THE ISSUES WE DISCUSS. I WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY THE MESSAGE TO MY COUNTRYMEN THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH JAPAN IS OF PRIME IMPORTANCE, AND THAT WE ARE MAKING PROGRESS ON MANY FRONTS.

AGAIN, THANKS FOR YOUR KINDNESS. IT IS AN HONOR TO BE HERE.

PRESS RELEASE



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Ambassador Mondale's Speech to the Japan National Press Club

***Tokyo, Japan
May 31, 1996***

(as prepared for delivery)

I am pleased to have a chance once again to speak before this prestigious forum. I value this opportunity to talk with some of Japan's most important journalists about matters of central interest to our two nations.

A little over a month ago, President Clinton's state visit marked one of the highlights of the postwar U.S.-Japan relationship. We are particularly grateful for the warmth and generosity shown to the President and his delegation by their Imperial Majesties.

I believe that the visit was one of the most successful ever. That conclusion is based on a wide range of important steps President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto took to strengthen our relationship across the broad spectrum of issues that build firm bilateral ties -- in security, trade, political, development and educational areas.

These measures are well known to you, but they are worth repeating:

One -- security. Our leaders strongly reaffirmed the importance of the security relationship, specifically endorsing the maintenance of American forces at their current level, taking fundamental measures to reduce irritants and the amount of land used in Okinawa, and agreeing to update the guidelines for U.S.-Japan cooperation to cope with security risks.

Two -- trade. Our leaders reaffirmed their support for the bilateral economic framework agreement reached in 1993 to resolve U.S.-Japan trade differences and declared their goal "...substantially to increase access and sales of competitive foreign goods and services through market openings and macroeconomic measures." They also reaffirmed our mutual support for APEC.

Three -- political. President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto also reaffirmed our cooperation across a wide range of political issues, including the KEDO (Korea Energy Development Organization) effort to discourage nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula, efforts to seek peace in the Middle East and elsewhere, support for Japan's membership on the U.N. Security Council, and efforts to modernize the United Nations.

Four -- Common Agenda. The President and Prime Minister reaffirmed their support for the robust and dynamic range of cooperative development efforts known as the Common Agenda, by which our nations work together with third countries to tackle health, environmental, educational, and other problems. Our leaders agreed to add efforts to counter terrorism to an already extensive list of joint initiatives.

Five -- educational exchanges. Our leaders endorsed efforts to expand educational

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opportunities for students in each other's countries, which I see as particularly vital to improving bilateral understanding.

This is a brief summary of a much longer list of cooperative undertakings by our governments. In total, they reflect the growing dynamism of our joint efforts, the broadening of our shared vision, and the enhanced value that each nation assigns to our capacity to serve the cause of peace, stability, economic prosperity, human development, and the enrichment of our cultural connections.

One cannot read this long list without realizing the many benefits that flow to our people and to the world from a healthy U.S.-Japan relationship.

As we meet today, on the heels of this successful summit, the good news is that the American-Japanese relationship is solid, productive and healthy. The world could not have better news.

But just as the preparations for this remarkable summit required the closest cooperation to ensure such progress, the implementation of our goals also demands a constant and careful management of these efforts. We must capture the spirit of this summit, build on the progress that was made, and realize more fully the benefits which will flow from strong bilateral ties into the next century.

In the security field, our leaders' agreement requires us to implement the special action committee's recommendations for Okinawa. We have done more serious work together to make our presence compatible with and acceptable to our Okinawan neighbors over the last six months than was done over the last twenty years. I have participated in this process with an enhanced respect for our nations' capacity to work on the same side of the table. We have taken these bold steps while fully sustaining our force readiness. Now we must prepare the final SACO (Special Action Committee on Okinawa) report by November, and move to the all-important but difficult implementation phase of the agreement.

We must also begin careful discussions to update the 1978 guidelines covering U.S.-Japan security cooperation. I would like to make it clear that we see this effort as requiring careful and patient consideration. It will take time.

We assume, moreover, that these deliberations will be based on Japan's constitution as well as its current defense policy. These are issues for Japan to decide, not the United States. Our discussions with Japan will be measured and prudent and will flow from a mutual desire to enhance our security cooperation in the case of a threat.

We are not premising our alliance on a particular threat. As Secretary Perry said, our alliance is based on common interests, not common enemies. The alliance is essential to sustain the stability and peace which are the underpinning for the remarkable economic progress enjoyed throughout Asia.

To ensure the continued health of the alliance, both countries have taken other important steps over the last year. Japan extended its crucial host nation support for another five years, a program that provides important financial support for U.S. Forces in Japan and serves as a symbol of Japan's commitment to the alliance. Japan also emphasized the key role of the alliance in its National Defense Program Outline issued in November. The United States had earlier issued its East Asia strategy report pledging its continuing commitment to the defense of Japan, and in support of stability in this region. In April, our nations also signed a new Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement to increase operational cooperation. These measures and those taken at the summit involve nothing less than the reaffirmation of our security relationship into the 21st century.

This spirit of cooperation is also crucial for our talks on trade. We have made some progress. Foreign imports into Japan have increased, and the current account imbalance is starting to trend down. We welcome this very positive news. Nevertheless, much remains to be done on our primary concerns about foreign access to this, the world's second largest economy. Our two nations must implement the many agreements we have reached. We must monitor progress in each area and willingly discuss new issues as they arise. In all of this, we must achieve the goal of a more open Japanese economy.

Contrary to some reports, the United States has not weakened in its commitment to

further important progress in the trade arena. Candor requires me to say that trade issues still put the greatest strain on our relationship.

Despite the progress that has been made in recent years, Japan's economy remains too closed, too over-regulated, and too slow to change. The framework agreement that our leaders again affirmed calls for bilateral negotiations to correct imbalances -- fully consistent with the open market trading principles of the World Trade Organization. Our discussions will also continue in global and regional fora. While the United States enjoys a strong position in almost every open economy in the world, in Japan we, along with other countries, still suffer from serious barriers to market access and foreign direct investment. This is not healthy for either nation, or for the world trading community.

If we could only establish the same kind of respectful cooperation in trade that we enjoy in all other areas of U.S.-Japan interaction, I am sure significant progress would be made and Japan would benefit greatly. Where Japan has opened its markets, Japanese have been beneficiaries.

We need to do a better job of solving trade issues before they become political problems. We must sit down together to work them out through constant dialogue, restrained rhetoric, and a broad and long-term perspective that looks beyond interest groups and short-term advantage.

Let me close by mentioning educational exchanges. You have often heard me talk about this. The United States and Japan are the two largest economies in the world. We are both democracies. We enjoy broad agreement on the goals of the civilized world and we work together very effectively toward those ends. The whole world benefits. Mike Mansfield's comment that the U.S.-Japan relationship is the most important

in the world -- "bar none" -- is surely even more true today.

I was therefore particularly pleased with the progress our leaders made at the summit to increase opportunities for our peoples to understand each other. I applaud the new Japanese programs to increase the numbers of American high school and undergraduate students studying here, and separate initiatives to bring teachers, school administrators and artists to Japan. Japan has also increased its support for scientists studying in Japan. This is very heartening. For America's part, we continue to maintain the widest possible open door to foreign students, and are delighted that Japanese comprise the largest contingent of international students on our campuses.

Nevertheless, because our two societies differ in many respects, we must do a better job of learning about each other. Only from such interchange can come the knowledge, respect and empathy so essential to a healthy relationship. While the JET program and others help many young Americans experience Japan firsthand, it concerns me that still too few Americans are studying, teaching, and working here. I find that fact dangerous, and I am glad to see a growing appreciation of it on both sides of the Pacific. I hope we can keep up the momentum started by our two leaders in April.

I have tried to recap briefly the themes that President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto stressed in their recent summit. When I meet with U.S. visitors, these are the issues we discuss. I will continue to carry the message to my countrymen that our relationship with Japan is of prime importance, and that we are making progress on many fronts.

Again, thanks for your kindness. It is an honor to be here.

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