

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

EXCHANGE OF REMARKS
BETWEEN THE PRESIDENT
AND
HIROHITO
EMPEROR OF JAPAN

THE SOUTH LAWN

10:55 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Your Majesties, it is an honor for me to extend to you, on behalf of the American people, a warm and heartfelt welcome to the United States.

Mrs. Ford joins me with the greatest personal pleasure for both of us in greeting Your Majesties here today.

This first State visit for an Emperor and Empress of Japan to the United States is an historic occasion with profound importance. Japan and the United States have had a special and unique relationship since the days when Commodore Perry sailed to Japan more than 120 years ago.

Our early relations were marked by many memorable events. The United States was the first country to establish a treaty relationship with Japan, the first to station a consul in Japan, and the first to receive a diplomatic commission from Japan. That commission was received by President Buchanan in 1860 here in the White House.

During the illustrious reign of your illustrious grandfather, Emperor Meiji, Japan chose the United States as the first stop for the Iwakura mission and Japan's special envoys were received by President Grant.

After President Grant left the Presidency, he visited Japan and met the Emperor. This was in 1878, almost a century ago. Emperor Meiji said, "America and Japan, being near neighbors, separated only by an ocean, will become more and more closely connected with each other as time goes on."

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These prophetic words symbolized our mutual desire to establish a sound and lasting friendship. What was a century ago a visionary goal has now become a reality for millions of Americans and Japanese. Our peoples are bound together by a multitude of institutional and personal ties.

The constant flow of knowledge, ideas and cultural influences between our two countries enriches the depth and meaning of our ties each year. It is this broad public involvement which fulfills the hopes of our early leaders.

The greetings of friendship which we exchange today represent the deep sentiments of both nations, at a time when the benefits of cooperative relations between our two countries are mutually acclaimed.

Your Majesty's visit symbolizes and strengthens the ties of friendship between our two peoples. The warm memories of my trip to Japan last fall remains vivid.

Mrs. Ford and I have happily anticipated Your Majesty's visit. We earnestly hope that your stay in Washington and your journey to other parts of the United States will be as pleasant to your Majesties personally as they are important to the history of our two great nations.

EMPEROR HIROHITO: Mr. President, Mrs. Ford, ladies and gentlemen:

Thank you most sincerely, Mr. President, for your gracious words of welcome. It has long been my wish to come to the United States, and the Empress and I deeply appreciate your kind invitation to pay this official visit.

We are indeed delighted to be here at this historic moment on the very eve of the Bicentennial of American independence when the American people reflect on the past and look to the future.

For me, also, this visit is a valuable opportunity to reflect on the past relationships between Japan and the United States and to its future. Our peoples withstood the challenges of one tragic interlude when the Pacific Ocean, symbol of tranquility, was instead a rough and stormy sea, and have built today unchanging ties of friendship and good will.

I feel immeasurably gratified by this happy development, and look forward with great anticipation to the future of our relationship.

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Mr. President, you visited Japan last year, as the first incumbent President of the United States to do so, and impressed us deeply by your eagerness to meet and mingle with our people.

I know that your visit has contributed greatly to the mutual trust between our two peoples. Although our stay in your country is for but a brief two weeks, we hope to meet with Americans from every walk of life and to glimpse a variety of American sights.

We will be happy if we, too, can contribute to everlasting friendship between our two peoples through our visit.

May I thank you again, Mr. President, for your warm hospitality. Permit me, also, to extend to all the citizens of your great country my best wishes for continued prosperity.

END (AT 11:05 A.M. EDT)