

A050A

Address to the Chinese National Defense University

As Delivered by Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen , The National Defense University, Beijing, China, Thursday, July 13, 2000

Thank you very much, President [of the National Defense University] Xing [Shizong]. It is a pleasure for me to return to China with my last visit having occurred back in last January of [1998]. On that trip, I had the occasion to address the Academy of Military Science in Beijing and had a meeting with President Jiang [Zemin] and Minister of National Defense [General] Chi [Hoatian]. I noticed as I walked into the reception room that there was a quote [which was], I believe, taken from Confucius which said it is a great joy to receive a friend from afar. I would like for you to think that I am a friend from afar.

Since my last visit, we have witnessed a time of swiftly moving global events, much of it with direct consequences for the ties between China and the United States. Indeed, the past two years have been a time of both strain and success for the relationship between our two nations. As we get back on course, we need to understand each other better and to improve communications, and this is one of the reasons I wanted to be here and talk directly to you this morning.

I'd like to take this opportunity to discuss U.S. policy goals in the world generally and, more specifically, in Asia. The United States seeks to be actively engaged in world events and world affairs, working with nations in every region to promote peace and stability and to advance the cause of personal economic freedom and security. Indeed, we live [engaged] in the world politically, economically, and militarily because our interests and ideals are dependent on the success and security and the prosperity of other nations.

For the United States, we see this course of engagement as not only being in our national interest but also in the interests of other countries as well. Our strategy for achieving peace and stability is reflected in our overall national security strategy. We want to shape a stable and secure international environment. We need to be able to respond to threats and crises, whether they are destabilizing local conflicts, such as those in East Timor, or humanitarian support, such as in Central America. We want to prepare for the future as well by investing in our forces and the technology they will require.

The United States is deeply engaged and involved in the Asian Pacific region because we recognize its strategic importance and its growing promise and prosperity in the new

century. A tremendous amount of U.S. trade is conducted with many nations in the region, and our future is linked with Asia across the Pacific just as surely as it is linked with Europe across the Atlantic. Our strategy of engagement in the Asian Pacific region itself remains grounded in our alliances with Japan, Republic of Korea, Australia, Thailand, the Philippines; our engagement in multilateral institutions like the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] Regional Forum; our forward military presence; and our active engagement with China.

Both of our nations have an interest in an Asia that is strategically secure and stable, where trade and investment and economic development can flourish. Both of our nations have an interest in a peaceful and nuclear-free Korean Peninsula. Both of our nations have an interest in the peaceful resolution of regional disputes. Both of our nations have an interest in confronting transnational threats, such as proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, drug trafficking, and environmental degradation.

Today, the United States and China can point to many areas where we have recognized our common interests and have successfully worked together for the benefit of the region and

000 60

other parts of the world. Economically, we have worked together to help calm the turbulent economic seas that still churned around this region during my last visit, and we have worked together to further strengthen our trade relations through the PNTR [Permanent Normal Trade Relations with the United States] and Chinese membership in the World Trade Organization.

Most recently, as many of you probably know, the House of Representatives in Washington embraced closer economic ties between the United States and China, calling for freer and fairer trade and greater openness between our nations. I am confident that the Senate will also approve this major step forward in our relations. I have met and talked with more than a dozen Members of Congress to ask them to support Permanent Normal Trade Relations, and tomorrow, I will be giving a speech at the Shanghai Stock Exchange discussing the importance of PNTR.

Diplomatically, in addition to our efforts with regard to Korea, we have worked together to control the spread of dangerous weapons of mass destruction, notably, with regard to forging an international consensus and a common strategy for pulling India and Pakistan [back from nuclear confrontation]. As our overall relations develop, our two nations can point to many areas where our military relations can develop as well.

When I last visited Beijing, our military-to-military relationship was starting to grow. We had initiated a strategic dialogue between our two ministries. The military commanders were consulting both directly here and in the United States. Our navies had conducted reciprocal ship visits. We had agreed to share information on humanitarian exercises. American forces were proud to offer humanitarian assistance during the tragic earthquakes that occurred in Hebei Province [before] my last visit. And during my visit here I became, I have been told, the first Western leader to visit your Air Defense Command Center in the Beijing region. And we also signed a Military Maritime Consultant Agreement to help avoid incidents at sea and to create a venue for dialogue between our respective navies.

This past January, I am very pleased to say that we reestablished our military-to-military cooperation at our talks in Washington. I return to China as part of our mutual effort to continue that process, a deliberate paced and balanced program that builds confidence and understanding. As a result, we can look forward to Defense Consultative Talks here in September and reciprocal ship visits, including a U.S. Navy ship in Qingdao and a Chinese Navy ship coming to both Hawaii and Seattle. Finally, I have just invited the Director of the PLA [People's Liberation Army], General Political Department General Yu Yang Bo, to the United States this year, and I have extended another invitation to Ministry Chi to come to Washington next year to meet with my successor.

As I said during my 1998 visit, we see a three-fold approach to our military cooperation: deepening our current joint efforts, modestly broadening them into new areas, and advancing from confidence-building to real world cooperation. [We want to create] a relationship, not of distrust, but one of dialogue and above all, one that does not endanger but enhances the security of all of our citizens, our allies, and our friends in the region.

This in turn illustrates a fundamental fact about our relationship with China. The United States cooperates with China not only because China is a great and growing nation. We cooperate with China because we have a great interest in doing so.

Both President Clinton and I have stated on a number of occasions to those who would seek somehow to, quote, contain China, [unquote] -- those in America who advocate such a policy -- that they advocate a policy of both folly and futility. We do not seek to contain the most populous nation on earth. In fact, it is in our interest to cooperate with you. China has a strong and growing economy, and it is increasingly a part of the open global market. It is a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. It is a member of more than

1,000 international organizations. It would not be in our interest to try to contain a nation that has the potential to offer so much to this region and to the world.

Across the Asian Pacific region, our alliances focus on preserving stability in Asia. The U.S.-Japan security alliance has been and remains a foundation for peace and stability in the region, and under our new guidelines for new defense cooperation, the United States and Japan are actively improving our ability to provide peacekeeping support, humanitarian relief, respond to regional crises, and integrate our security structures. As I pointed out two years ago, it is a defensive alliance that does not isolate or threaten anyone in the region. On the contrary, like all of our regional alliances and partnerships, it is designed to expand stability for the benefit of all nations.

America's alliance with the Republic of Korea remains a key factor on the Korean Peninsula and, hence, for peace throughout the region. Both the United States and China can be justifiably proud of our role in supporting the efforts of leaders of both North and South to take steps to bring their nations together, and our cooperation is helping to bridge the bitter divide of the past half-century with an indispensable element in the success of the recent summit in Pyongyang. And I think that the recent summit demonstrated not only the desire on the part of the Korean people for peace but the value of U.S.-China cooperation to the peace and stability of the Asian Pacific Region. Now, the path to permanent peace on the peninsula is likely to be a long one. We must remain vigilant even as we are open to change, and there are grounds for hope that the fifty-year confrontation in Korea may be ended if the promise of the summit is finally realized.

Let me try to summarize quickly that we have relations with Australia, an alliance with Thailand and a security relationship and ties with the Philippines, all of which are helping to ensure stability and peace for all of the nations in this region, including China.

And we should face very clearly and up front as great nations that we still, nonetheless, have differences of philosophy and opinion. Some of these differences are very important, and we need to address them through open dialogue. But in the effort to deal with these differences, I think that we can build upon a foundation of important common interest.

One of the areas where we clearly have a difference is around the subject of a National Missile Defense System. I'd like to take just a moment to just explain our perspective. The global spread of dangerous technologies -- chemical, nuclear, biological agents, and the missiles to delivery them -- constitutes a great and growing threat to all nations of the world.

Neither the United States, nor China, nor Russia for that matter, can know with certainty what terrorist groups or rogue nations may threaten us with these weapons in the future. As long as these weapons of mass destruction continue to spread in ever widening circles, that threat will continue to exist. And that's why we must also work vigorously to stop the spread of weapons technology, to deter its use, and to work to develop a system to defend against a limited ballistic missile attack from an irresponsible nation.

Let me be as clear I can, as I was with our Russian friends. I met recently with President

[Vladimir] Putin in Russia and pointed out that our administration is strongly committed to maintaining the ABM Treaty [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty] as a cornerstone of strategic stability. Doing so is entirely consistent with updating the treaty to permit limited defenses, while ensuring continued stable deterrence. Such a system would not be designed to address China's missile capability, but its purpose, if the United States decides to deploy it--and the President has made no such decision at this point--would be to stop a limited number of missiles from isolated dangerous nations and terrorists. It is designed to enhance peace and stability, not to threaten the security of any nation.

I know there are calls from time to time to say that the United States should simply remove its presence from the Asian Pacific region, but I would ask you to consider who would fill the vacuum under those circumstances. Would it be China? Would it be Japan? Would it be India? Would it be Pakistan? Who would rush to fill the vacuum that would be left by the United States, which has done so much to preserve stability and therefore, allow investment to flow into the Asian Pacific Region and to benefit China specifically?

I met with Deng Xiao Ping back in 1978, and, at that time, he talked about his four modernizations. As a result of the presence of the United States as a stabilizing force for the Asian Pacific region, China has been able to pursue its four modernizations. China has been able to move from the 20th Century now into the 21st Century as a burgeoning economy. And so our presence here has been very beneficial, and we want you to consider that as we move forward to work with you in a cooperative way to continue to promote that stability, that peace, and indeed the prosperity.

As you may have gathered, Taiwan is very much a subject of discussion during my visit. The United States is committed to the One-China policy and the Three Communiqués. We are also committed to the Taiwan Relations Act, and we believe the reconciliation must occur through peaceful dialogue and not through any military action. We are committed to try to find ways in which that can be achieved. I believe, and the President believes, that the newly elected President Chen Shuibian is looking for ways in which to establish a reconciliation and that hopefully a way can be found. But it must be found through peaceful means and not through military action. We recognize how sensitive an issue this is for China and how passionately you feel about it, but we are convinced that ways can be found to achieve your goal through peaceful means.

I would like to shorten my presentation to say something that is very important to me. Too often we tend to talk to each other or communicate over long distances and we do it through a media that at many times presents the United States in a way that is not only unhelpful, but is untrue. The characterizations of the United States as being a hegemon, as a country determined to dominate the world and to contain and dominate China are simply untrue. Yet, we see constant references such as this appearing in the Chinese media, which only provokes a negative reaction on the part of many in my own country. We have an absolute obligation to deal with you directly, honestly, and candidly. That is precisely the reason why I wanted to come to you today, to discuss this in this forum so that we could raise the issues without any filters of either hyperbole or criticism or negativity that, too often, characterize the nature of the U.S. position and policies.

Let me conclude with a quote taken from Lao-tze, who once said that what is firmly established cannot be uprooted, what is firmly grasped cannot slip away, it will be honored from generation to generation. The United States believes, and we hope that China believes, that working together we can firmly establish bonds that will not slip away, bonds that will be honored from generation to generation to the benefit of both our nations and, indeed, the entire Asia Pacific region. Thank you.