

ROC President Meets VFW National Commander

May 05, 2009

TAIPEI, Republic of China — President Ma Ying-jeou met with the Commander-in-Chief of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States Glen Gardner and former Commander-in-Chief Larry Rivers at the Presidential Office on the afternoon of May 5. The president extended a warm welcome to the visitors on their trip to Taiwan.

President Ma noted that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States was founded in the late 19th century and has a history dating back over 100 years. The organization has a membership totaling over two million. The President of the United States places great importance on the opinions of the organization and each year meets with its key officers, he said.

President Ma furthermore said that one unique aspect of the Veterans of Foreign Wars is that each of its members has fought overseas at some point. The organization passes a resolution supporting the Republic of China at every general assembly, making it one of the best friends of the ROC, he said. The president added that the ROC's Veterans Affairs Commission and the Veterans of Foreign Wars have a long-established friendly relationship.

The president commented that he visited Kinmen on August 24 of last year to preside over activities commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis. At the time, the government specially invited the families of American officers and soldiers who took part in the war or who served in Taiwan to participate in the event. The president said the proceedings were extremely moving. President Ma commented that mainland China's minister of defense originally proclaimed that Communist forces would occupy Kinmen within 5-10 days. However, even after one month and the firing of nearly 500,000 shells, they still were unable to take Kinmen. Ultimately, mainland China announced a ceasefire and changed its tactic to shelling Kinmen on the odd numbered days of the month. At the time, the American military provided considerable assistance to the ROC by helping to transport weapons and ammunition to Kinmen. This was crucial in helping us to continue to defend Kinmen, and the president said he is deeply appreciative to the United States for the assistance provided.

President Ma remarked that last year former US President George W. Bush notified

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Congress of the administration's approval of arms sales to Taiwan. President Ma said this will provide Taiwan's military with modern defensive weaponry that will help defend Taiwan's security. President Ma added that at the same time that we are improving relations with mainland China, Taiwan and the United States will still maintain a security relationship. The two sides have established mutual trust that will provide the foundation for bilateral relations to move forward, he said.

Mr. Gardner expressed his appreciation to President Ma for taking time out of his busy schedule to meet with him and Mr. Rivers. He also said that the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States will continue to support the ROC. The organization also looks forward to exchanging opinions with Taiwan on a range of issues concerning veterans, he said.