



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Adelaide Press Club

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## **Remarks of Ambassador Bleich Adelaide Press Club**

*(As prepared for delivery – March 5, 2010)*

Good afternoon. I'd like to thank the Adelaide Press Club for hosting this luncheon and giving me the opportunity to meet with you all today. It's great to be back in Adelaide so soon. As many of you probably know, I was just here a couple weeks ago with U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense William Lynn. Amongst other events we attended the opening of the state of the art Techport facility.

But on this trip I'm very happy to partake in a completely different, yet no less important, aspect of the U.S. Australia relationship. That of arts and culture. I'm also happy that my family will be able to join me. Tomorrow we will attend the Adelaide Festival and hear a performance by jazz great Wayne Shorter. I want to congratulate the city of Adelaide on the 50th anniversary of the Adelaide Festival. It's truly a world class civic cultural event. We are really looking forward to it. And I am very pleased that the U.S. Government could help support bringing American artists to the festival. I think promoting the arts is one of the noblest things a government can do. I understand the economic realities of our time, but artistic and cultural exchanges work in a unique way unparalleled by formal diplomatic or institutional agreements. It's these kind of cultural exchanges that have really helped solidify on a personal basis the enduring friendship between our two great countries.

Australia and the United States share one of the strongest international partnerships in the world. I think President Obama's visit to Australia later this month - earlier in his administration than any previous president - reflects that this relationship, this partnership, is more important than ever.

Today I'd like to talk about our partnership, and how it fits into President Obama's call for renewed engagement throughout the Asia Pacific region with all of our partners. I also want to let you know how I see the Australia-U.S. relationship, and offer a few thoughts on its meaning for our broader agenda.

I have been good friends with Barack Obama for over two decades. We were together on election night in Grant Park when he won the Presidency, and I flew from Chicago to D.C. the next day (still a little bleary) to start work on his transition. And for the first 8 months of his Administration I had the honor to serve as his Special Counsel in the White



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House. But when the opportunity arose to come to Australia, I seized it. And for the last four months I have thrown myself into the job, traveling all across the country, meeting with hundreds of people - government officials to be sure, but also with local leaders and ordinary Australians.

I came to Australia because I can think of no greater way to effect the vision of President Obama than through the extraordinary partnership we have with you. The President's agenda is about partnership and engagement. His worldview was shaped by living part of his childhood in the Pacific and outside of the United States. What he learned was that we are all safer when we work to create a world in which we have more friends and fewer enemies. U.S. leadership in this region grew not merely from pure force, but from something else as well: engendering genuine respect. After World War II, the U.S. established that it had power to lead. But it was acts of engagement from the Marshall Plan, to ANZUS, to the Berlin Airlift, that made it a leader.

Since taking office, President Obama has worked to renew that form of great American leadership: our mandate is to renew our engagement with the world based on mutual interests and mutual respect.

That is why Australia is so attractive. No relationship between two nations better exemplifies that ideal than our relationship. And so no partnership has a greater chance of extending that engagement through the Asia-Pacific region than ours.

Across every form of endeavor, from military cooperation to space exploration, from combating climate change to increasing cultural exchange, from fighting fires to forming trade zones, the United States is committed to Australia.

We simply have no better friend in the world.

This is not an accident, or an odd twist of nature. The Australia-United States bilateral relationship was built by far sighted people over generations. The alliance enjoys solid bipartisan support in both countries, because it is built on a foundation of security, prosperity and most importantly, our shared values.

And because it is not neglected.

We focus on shared long term goals, and we work in good faith to overcome short-term differences or self interest. In doing that, we have taken a vast ocean that should separate us, and we have turned it into a zone of peace.

Prime Minister Rudd has said that Australia is Western by history and Asian by geography. President Obama has spoken of the great Westernized United States as a



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Pacific Country and of himself as our first Pacific President. There is no question that the Asia-Pacific's influence is great, and that it is growing. Indeed, the Pacific holds the key to the future. With roughly 40 percent of the world's population, and over 54 percent of global GDP centered in the Asia Pacific, America's success and Australia's success are inextricably linked to this vital region. And thus our nations, this region, and the world as a whole depend upon the commitment of our nations to reach across the Pacific and extend peace and prosperity throughout the region.

I want to speak briefly about four pillars of our partnership and where they stand today. Our respect for each other and for the rest of the world is a respect built first on strength. As I mentioned, I was just in Adelaide with our Deputy Secretary of Defense. We toured the phenomenal new Techport facility. It is here in South Australia, where much of Australia's future naval capability outlined in last year's Defense White paper will be built. For 60 years our two navies, and our other services, have worked in true partnership to protect the Pacific and keep its channels free for trade. The Pacific does not separate us from Australia and Asia -- it binds us and connects us to them, and we must always keep it free, peaceful, and prosperous.

Late last year I visited the Stirling submarine base outside Perth. I saw first-hand how U.S. and Australian sailors work together seamlessly and with such technological precision that I could only tell them apart by their uniforms. They are the best trained, the best coordinated, and the best informed sailors on the seas.

Today, as we speak, our young people are likewise fighting side by side in another theater, in Afghanistan. We have a truly unified force in Oruzgan Province and Kandahar. Australia is our largest non-NATO troop contributor. Your 1550 troops have been invaluable. We are grateful for your civilian support as well. These people are helping Afghans to lead their own civil society. As the President has said, we can only make the Afghan government self-sustaining by giving its people the tools to lead, and by helping them to eliminate corruption in their government and in the provinces. This is hard work, done person to person, in lonely outposts in remote provinces of Afghanistan. But our sons and daughters do this because they, and the children of our allies, know that the world cannot afford for Afghanistan to once again be a safe haven for Al-Qaeda.

I want to thank the brave Australians, military and civilian, for their service in Afghanistan. We mourn for the 11 soldiers you have lost, and we pray for the others just as we do for our own children. Because we feel about you, as we do about our own.

The second pillar of our partnership is prosperity and commerce. The United States is Australia's third largest trading partner after China and Japan. In 2005, the U.S.-Australian Free Trade Agreement went into effect and it has just accelerated that trade relationship. In its first four years, the FTA has led to a 57% increase in total bilateral



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trade in goods and services (approximately US\$51 billion in 2008). Even with the global slowdown, in 2008 just under half a million Americans visited Australia, and, ever the travelers, nearly 700,000 Australians visited the United States. Clearly the free trade agreement is working to the benefit of both countries.

We also have a strong reciprocal investing relationship with Australia. The latest numbers we have indicate U.S. investment in Australia stood at roughly 350 billion U.S. dollars last year. The U.S. is the largest investor in Australia, and the primary destination for Australian investment abroad. I think the LNG sector is likely to ensure that trend continues for years to come. Chevron for example has both the Greater Gorgon and Wheatstone projects. ConocoPhillips has the Darwin LNG project, and ExxonMobil has investments in both Great Gorton and is moving on the Scarborough project. To put it in perspective, just one of those projects, Gorgon, is bigger than the entire market cap of Unocal. It is more than Chevron paid for Texaco. These are big projects. But I also expect there to be substantial investment in Cleantech and defense sectors.

Finally, a lot of our engagement in Australia relates to services. American companies, large and small, hire Australian workers. These companies currently contribute to Australia's prosperity by employing over 325,000 Australians. It goes back to partnership. We don't merely buy from Australia. We invest in Australia's future and its people. Because we believe in Australia.

Free trade has been good for American commerce, for Australian commerce, and it is good for stabilizing world markets. So our next priority is to continue to open our markets and extend free trade. We committed to engaging in the Trans-Pacific Partnership which will bring 8 nations on both sides of the Pacific into a free-trade relationship with a multilateral, state-of-the-art, 21st century agreement. Negotiations on the TPP agreement will get underway in Melbourne in two weeks.

Like Australia, the United States and every other nation in the world is feeling the effects of an unsustainable energy policy. The nations of the world have built their economies on fuel supplies that will run out one day, and that are spoiling our seas and skies. The third pillar of our relationship represents the greatest of our many challenges together -- and the one I believe our children and grandchildren will judge us by. Developing a clean and sustainable energy future. This will give future generations a dependable source of energy. And it will help slow and reverse global climate change. The threat of climate change is real and the United States is committed to meeting our responsibilities to develop a new safe energy future.

Australia has been a leader on the issue of combating climate change. Thanks to the efforts of Australia and many other partners, we took an important first step at the



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Copenhagen Conference. For the first time in history, all major economies came together to embrace their responsibility to take action to confront the threat of climate change.

As we have seen here, this will not be easy. The robust debate you've had in Australia reflects that. But by placing this issue at the top of your global agenda – by making it an issue of great public debate – you've done us all a great service. Now more than ever, our people, and our planet depend on collaboration between our scientists and engineers and political leaders to find new ways to increase efficiency standards, create clean energy technologies and cut greenhouse gas emissions.

Our planet is threatened however not just by changes in natural resources, but also by man-made threats: the greatest of these is nuclear weapons. The fourth pillar of our relationship is saving the planet from our worst instincts and our most destructive people. To do this, the United States and Australia cooperate and share intelligence to secure vulnerable nuclear material, help other nations strengthen their own capacity to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction and bring international outlaws to justice.

We stand together on some of the toughest nonproliferation issues, including Iran and North Korea. And because of the fundamental trust between our two countries, we can have the type of frank and honest exchange about these matters that is the only way to stop this threat. Australia has been a leader in global nonproliferation efforts, and will no doubt be an active player at both the Nuclear Security Summit in April in Washington, and the NPT Review conference in May in New York.

All of these things will take work, and that is precisely what the President expects of me. It is a roll-up-your sleeves job. I am energized to be his personal representative in this great country, in this great region, at this important time. I take none of it for granted. I am personally looking forward to President Obama's visit. And from traveling around the country and talking with people, I think Australia is very excited about the visit as well.

So on behalf of the President of the United States and the people of the United States, I thank you. Too often this world is marred by regions of conflict and instability. Our nations offer a beacon of hope. That great nations can learn from one another, trust in one another, and help one another to create a region of peace that stretches 10,000 miles around the globe. We do this no matter which decade, no matter which party is in power, or which challenge we face. We are committed to this together. And so I thank you for the great gift of your friendship, and for all that we will do together in the years ahead.

Thank you.