

News & Politics

[I Was Wrong, but So Were You](#)

President George W. Bush has suddenly shifted rhetoric on the war in Iraq. Until recently, ... [More](#)



Bush Shifts Focus With Trip to Asia

President Tries to Show U.S. Commitment to Region

By Peter Baker

Washington Post Staff Writer

Tuesday, November 15, 2005; Page A18

KYOTO, Japan, Nov. 15 -- President Bush embarked on a week-long trip to Asia on Monday aimed at reasserting the U.S. role in a region where China has moved to expand its influence lately while the Bush administration was focused on the Middle East.

Flying out of Washington just a week after returning from Latin America, the president will again escape, at least temporarily, the domestic political difficulties that have plagued him in Washington. But analysts and diplomats predict he could find the geopolitical challenges of Asia vexing in their own way as he navigates the touchy sensibilities of the region.

The stops in Japan, South Korea, China and Mongolia will center on issues as far afield as trade imbalances and avian flu, officials said, while security matters such as North Korea nuclear arms negotiations and perennial tensions over Taiwan and the legacy of World War II complicate the diplomatic discussions. Stung by news reports focusing on the setbacks of the Latin America trip, White House officials tried to lower expectations this time.

"I don't think there are going to be any headline breakthroughs," national security adviser Stephen J. Hadley told reporters on Air Force One. "This is not a trip where the president has to come with a deliverable initiative." The main goal, he said in a separate briefing last week, is "to show the U.S. commitment to Asia as an area of our interest" and "to indicate clearly that the president knows the United States has an important role to play in both the economic and security challenges in Asia and that he wants to play that role."

To many diplomats and specialists in the region, that message seems long overdue. While Bush has focused on the war in Iraq and the broader struggle against terrorism, foreign policy specialists said, U.S. visibility in Asia has been eclipsed by China's growing economic and political power.

The administration has sought to engage more in the region in recent months, dispatching a series of high-level officials, including Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld. But Asian leaders are frustrated that U.S. officials appear focused so much on terrorism to the exclusion of other important developments.

"There's a lot of push-back from around the region," said Edward J. Lincoln, a former special adviser in the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo and now a scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations. "They are getting really tired of the one note coming out of the Bush administration. They think a lot of other things are going on."

Bush addressed U.S. troops at Elmendorf Air Force Base in Alaska during a refueling stop Monday, repeating almost word for word a speech he gave Friday. He assailed Democrats who have accused him of manipulating intelligence to justify the war in Iraq. "They are playing politics with this issue, and they are sending mixed signals to our troops and the enemy," Bush told the service members. "And that's irresponsible."

But Democrats turned their attention to the president's Asia policy, blaming him for not addressing the rise of China, which has alarmed some in Washington. "The current ad hoc, inconsistent and essentially aimless approach of U.S. policy toward China has exacerbated these fears," Senate Minority Leader Harry M. Reid (D-Nev.) wrote Bush in a letter Monday.

After the president arrives here, the picturesque ancient imperial capital of Japan, on Tuesday, he is to spend a day meeting with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and visiting the Kinkakuji Temple of the Golden Pavilion, a gold-leafed pagoda and the nation's most visited temple.



South Korean protesters hold anti-Bush banners at a rally in front of U.S. embassy in Seoul. The Korean letters read "We are against Bush's visit." (Lee Jin-man - AP)

Tuesday, Nov. 15, at 11 a.m. ET

Post Politics Hour

Washington Post White House reporter Peter Baker discusses the latest in political news.

Politics Trivia

Supreme Court nominee Samuel A. Alito Jr. was a law professor at which university in New Jersey?

Rutgers University

Officials expect Bush and Koizumi to discuss how to keep up the pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program as well as bilateral issues such as persuading Tokyo to lift a ban on U.S. beef imposed after a mad cow scare. Another topic that could come up is the recent friction between Japan and China, exacerbated by Koizumi's visits to a shrine honoring soldiers, including war criminals, from World War II, when Japan occupied China.

Aides said Bush plans to deliver the main speech of his trip in Japan, focusing on his aspirations for Asia and the need to expand freedom and democracy in the region. From here, Bush is to head to Pusan, South Korea, for the annual summit of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, or APEC, where he hopes to promote further trade liberalization and intensified efforts to combat a possible avian flu pandemic.

While in Pusan, Bush also is to attend separate meetings with South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Bush then is to fly to Beijing for the third China trip of his presidency, as he tries to balance his interest in economic and security matters with his second-inauguration commitment to "ending tyranny" in "every nation." U.S. officials expect a Chinese concession on political prisoners before Bush's arrival, which they hope will ease the discussions. Bush plans to attend church in Beijing to symbolize support for religious freedom, although it will be a state-sanctioned church.

In meeting with Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, officials said, Bush will press them to further ease control over the Chinese currency and crack down against DVD and software pirates. With the annual trade gap approaching \$200 billion, he will also seek Chinese assurances of fair trade, the officials said.

The Chinese will want to discuss Taiwan, a subject U.S. officials hope to dispense with by sticking to the boilerplate policy language and nothing more. "They'll bring it up, we'll listen, we'll say what we have to say and that'll be it," said Adam Segal, a regional specialist at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Bush's final stop in the area will be the remote, mountainous nation of Mongolia, where no other U.S. president has visited. Aides said Bush chose to stop there because Mongolia has sent 160 troops to serve alongside U.S. forces in Iraq, the third-highest contribution by an ally when measured as a proportion of the population. Rumsfeld recently visited to say thanks, and the Mongolians gave him a horse in return.

The president is to return to Washington on Monday.

[Print This Article](#) [E-Mail This Article](#) [Permission to Republish](#)

© 2005 The Washington Post Company

[What's this?](#)

Save on All Your Calls with Vonage

When looking for local regional and long distance calling, use Vonage to make calls to all 50 states and Canada. Get voicemail, great international rates and more. Sign up today.

www.vonage.com

\$160,000 Mortgage for \$633/mo

Refinance rates are at record lows. Compare rates â€“ free service.

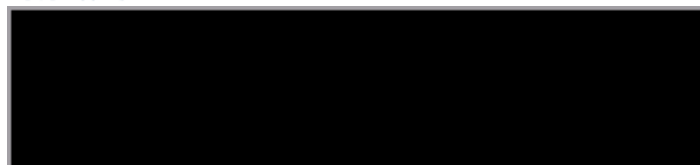
www.lowermybills.com

Compare Refinance Quotes

Get up to 4 free refinance or home equity quotes - one easy form.

www.nextag.com

Advertisement



Seton Hall University

Princeton University

Kean University

Who's Blogging?

Read what bloggers are saying about this article.

• [Kabbalah For Women](#)

• [BushTracker.net](#)

• [Full List of Blogs \(2 links\) »](#)

Most Blogged About Articles

• [On washingtonpost.com](#) | [On the web](#)

POWERED BY
Technorati



SEARCH

Featured Advertiser Links

- [Sign up with VONAGE and get 1 free month](#)
- [Saving for college? Use holidays to earn BabyMint Bucks™](#)
- [NASCAR Tickets on Sale Now](#)
- [Lawyers: Guidant Defibrillators, Ortho Evra, Toxic Pollution](#)
- [\\$160,000 Mortgage for Under \\$785/Month!](#)
- [For College Graduates, Reduce Your Student Loans](#)
- [Refinance a \\$200,000 loan for \\$770/mo](#)
- [Ride Acela Express and earn double points](#)
- [Cool gadgets, hot deals. Visit circuitcity.com](#)

Advertisement



Advertisement

[NEWS](#) | [OPINIONS](#) | [SPORTS](#) | [ARTS & LIVING](#) Discussions | [Photos & Video](#) | [City Guide](#) [CLASSIFIEDS](#) | [JOBS](#) | [CARS](#) | [REAL ESTATE](#)

washingtonpost.com: [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [About Us](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Make Us Your Homepage](#) | [mywashingtonpost.com](#) | [Work at washingtonpost.com](#)

The Washington Post: [Subscribe](#) | [Subscriber Services](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Electronic Edition](#) | [Online Photo Store](#) | [The Washington Post Store](#)

The Washington Post Company: [Information and Other Post Co. Websites](#)

© Copyright 1996- 2005 The Washington Post Company | [User Agreement and Privacy Policy](#) | [Rights and Permissions](#)