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GEORGE W. BUSH

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Office of the Press Secretary
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Press Briefing on North Korea Missile Launch

Via Conference Call

6:31 P.M. EDT

MR. SNOW: Hello, everybody. What I'm going to do is just senior administration official attribution. I will lay out what we have, and I think my colleague will join us, too -- he is speaking with the President right now, and if he becomes available.

All right. Here is what we have. I've just done a similar briefing in the press room, attribution, senior administration official. We can talk about that if you have other concerns a little bit later.

(Note: it was later decided that this would be an on the record briefing by Mr. Snow and Mr. Hadley, attributable to them.)

Here's what we have. We have three launches today by North Korea. One occurring at 2:33 p.m. eastern time, the second one at approximately 3:04 p.m. eastern time, a third one at approximately 4:01 p.m. eastern time. The first two were either short or medium range ballistic missiles; don't want to get too specific because we haven't nailed it down yet. Both landed short of Japan. The third was a Taepodong-2 that vanished shortly after launch, less than a minute after launch. That was a failed launch of the Taepodong-2.

The first two took place at Kittaeryong. The first two from Kittaeryong, the third from the Taepodong test site.

The President was notified in all three cases. He has spoken with the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State and the National Security Advisor.

Q This is Anita from Fox, we got disconnected somehow at the very top. Can you start from the beginning again?

MR. SNOW: Okay, I'll run through it again. Who all do we have here, by the way? Well, never mind, I don't want to do that because that will take too long.

There were three launches today out of North Korea. The first two were from the Kittaeryong.

MS. PERINO: You might mention to her that you wanted to do this as a senior administration official.

MR. SNOW: Yes, we're doing this as senior administration official.

From Kittaeryong -- a short or medium-range ballistic missiles. These are not unusual sorts of firings. Both of them -- the first one occurred at 2:33 p.m. eastern time, the second at 3:04 p.m. eastern time, the third at -- those were both at Kittaeryong. The third launch took place from the Taepodong test site, that occurred at 4:01 p.m. eastern time. That was a failed launch; it failed less than a minute into flight.

The President was notified in all three cases. He has spoken with the National Security Advisor, the Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State. There have also been diplomatic contacts between the United States -- we've spoken with the Chinese, the South Korean and the Japanese government. Chris Hill, of the Department of State, will be heading to the region tomorrow. He's preparing, at least, to leave for the region tomorrow. And, also, Steve Hadley will be meeting with the South Korean National Security Advisor, his South Korean counterpart, who is in town. That meeting was pre-scheduled. But they obviously will continue their consultations, as well.

In doing this, the North Koreans have once again isolated themselves. They have defied their neighbors who urged them not to have a launch. The South Koreans, the Japanese and the Chinese all have asked them not to do it. The United States now will work with the other parties in the six-party talks to figure out the appropriate way to move forward. But I think it's fair to say that this is a further indication of isolation on the part of the North Koreans. And it also reminds everybody about the nature of the regime. So that is kind of where we're going.

Any questions?

Q What does Chris Hill going to the region to do? Who is he going to meet with? And what's the purpose?

MR. SNOW: I am going to wait -- the State Department announced Chris's itinerary and I think that's probably the appropriate thing to do. So I direct those questions to Sean McCormack. The other thing is we will be trying to get a statement out, but I'm not going to be foolish enough to guarantee you a time. We'll get it ready as soon as possible, but I don't even know if we'll have one tonight. But we will be producing an official statement.

Q When you say that the short and medium launches were not unusual sorts of firing, is it your view that they do or not violate the missile launch moratorium?

MR. SNOW: I am not going to -- you know what, that is a question for my colleague to answer, when we get him on the line.

Q There were reports that there was a fourth missile fired, are you --

MR. SNOW: We have no confirmation of that. We have heard there has been a single press report of

that, but we know nothing about it.

Q Can you repeat that? What was the question?

MR. SNOW: Out of the region there was a report of a fourth launch. We are not aware of a fourth launch, and we have no word that it's a launch at this point. Obviously if we get data on that, we'll share it with you as rapidly as possible. But we cannot confirm a fourth launch. We can confirm the three that I've mentioned to you.

Q Do you think that the North Koreans were trying to send a particular message to the United States by doing this on the 4th of July, our national --

MR. SNOW: I'd rather not try to read the mind of a leader, nor do any of us want to read the mind of a leader in the non-transparent society. It's clear that whatever the motivation, the result is pretty obvious, which is that the North Koreans have isolated themselves and --

(Interruption to call.)

MR. SNOW: All right, we have two additional pieces of information. We actually do have confirmations now of a fourth and fifth launch.

Q Fifth, did you say, Tony?

MR. SNOW: Two more launches. A fourth launch that occurred at 6:12 p.m., into the exclusion zone, landed at 6:17 p.m. A second one -- both of them landed in the Sea of Japan. That was a Scud, we think. The second was a Nodong, landed in the Sea of Japan.

Olivier, in answer to your question --

Q Excuse me --

MR. SNOW: I'm sorry, what?

Q What time was the fifth launch?

MR. SNOW: Steve Hadley is going to join us in a minute. He just gave me that information; I'll let him give you the information on the second one, because I don't have it.

Q So confirmation of a fourth?

MR. SNOW: And a fifth.

Q And the fourth was at 6:12 p.m.

MR. SNOW: Yes, 6:12 p.m., eastern time, landed five minutes later.

Q In the Sea of Japan?

MR. SNOW: In the Sea of Japan. The fifth was a -- that was a Scud, the fifth was a Nodong.

Q How do you spell that?

MR. SNOW: N-o-d-o-n-g.

Q Okay.

MR. SNOW: Also landed in the Sea of Japan.

Olivier, in answer to your question, we do consider these violations of the moratorium.

Q All of them?

MR. SNOW: Yes. You can double-check with Steve, but I think so. But I will let him -- because honestly, I'm not as conversant with the technical aspect, so I'll let Steve fill you in.

Certainly, the Taepodong -- and I'll give the answer on the rest. I'm sorry, go ahead, folks.

Q Tony, can you just confirm, did all five fall in the Sea of Japan?

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q All in Sea of Japan?

Q All five of them?

MR. SNOW: That is correct.

OPERATOR: Mr. Hadley is on the phone.

MR. SNOW: Steve, did all five fall in the Sea of Japan?

MR. HADLEY: I have one piece of news. There has been a sixth.* The fifth missile was a Nodong, it hit the Sea of Japan. It was launched at 6:31 p.m., eastern daylight time, impact at 6:36 p.m. There has been a sixth launch. This is also from a Nodong, also from the Kittaeryong facility. We don't have an impact location or time at this point.

Q The Nodong is a medium-range missile?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, we would consider them that; that's exactly right. They're on the short range of the medium range, but we would consider them medium-range missiles, that is true.

They have a couple more Scud/Nodongs probably ready. They may be launching those, as well, so we may be not yet through this cycle.

Q I'm sorry, what was that, Steve? I apologize.

MR. HADLEY: I said there are another couple Scuds or Nodongs that we think are in preparation, so there may be a couple more for all we know, before the night is out.

Q So we have a fourth in the Sea of Japan, we have the fifth in the Sea of Japan, and we have the sixth?

MR. HADLEY: Undetermined at this point. It was just launched at 6:32 p.m. They're still trying to get a fix on it.

Q And the President has been notified of all of these launches now?

MR. HADLEY: I just called him and notified the fifth -- I was notified of the sixth just as I was coming into this call. As soon as I get out of this call, I will let him know.

Q The fourth was at 6:12 p.m., the fifth was what time?

MR. HADLEY: The fifth one is at 6:31 p.m., eastern daylight time.

Q And it impacted at 6:36 p.m.?

MR. HADLEY: At 6:36 p.m. That's our current information. But this is information is all, you know, kind of hot off the wire, so I'm sure it will be adjusted a little bit.

Q Okay. And the fourth was a Scud, the second -- the fifth was a Nodong?

MR. HADLEY: The fifth was a Nodong, and the sixth was a Nodong.

Q And the fourth?

MR. SNOW: A Scud.

MR. HADLEY: The fourth was a Scud.

Q What range missile is a Scud considered?

MR. HADLEY: It's probably -- it's a short-range ballistic missile. These went out about 275 miles, something like that.

Q Which ones, the first ones?

Q And is the Taepong [sic] -- I'm sorry, I'm not familiar with these terms --

MR. HADLEY: That's okay. It's the Taepodong-2.

Q Is that considered a long-range missile?

MR. HADLEY: Yes, it is considered an intercontinental range missile. It is.

Q And that was a failed launch, you said. So what have you learned from all of this?

MR. HADLEY: Well, it think what we've learned is something about capabilities, the fact that they can fire Scuds and Nodongs is not a surprise. The Taepodong obviously was a failure -- that tells you something about capabilities.

What we really don't have a fix on is, you know, what's the intention of all this, what is the purpose of all this? Because this is clearly something that's in violation, we would say, in violation of the moratorium on missile tests. Certainly, the TD-2, the Taepodong-2 is. This is something the entire international community was aware they were preparing to do, urged them not to do -- and they have basically defied the international community and gone ahead and done it anyway. It's hard to get a sense on what they think is to be achieved by this.

Q And what was the President's reaction when you told him of this?

MR. HADLEY: This is something we've been seeing coming for a while, so it's not a particular surprise. We've had fairly active diplomacy, as you know, getting people to -- sharing information, getting people in their diplomacy to urge common action -- urge a common message to North Korea that this is a bad thing to do, and talk about the fact that if they took this action, the international community would have to meet and decide on what kind of actions would occur.

So, you know, we've been doing a lot of preparations for this, and the President, I think -- so it wasn't that he was surprised, because we've seen this coming for a while. I think his instinct is that this just shows the defiance of the international community by North Korea. This is not a U.S.-North Korea issue; they were receiving messages from the entire international community on this subject and chose to ignore them.

It shows you a little bit, therefore, about this regime and the nature of its diplomacy. And I think it underscores the importance for the international community to stay together, send a common message

and decide where we go next. Obviously, where we'd like to go is back to the six-party talks and implementing that September '05 agreement, where North Korea gives up its nuclear programs.

Q Steve, when you -- we heard earlier this is no immediate threat to the United States. But what has been the reaction from Japan? And is it seen as a threat there?

MR. HADLEY: Well, look, one of the things we've got to do is analyze each of these launches, certainly analyze the Taepodong-2 launch and see what it tells us about what the North Koreans had in mind.

Obviously, Japan, if you read the press and the like, Japan was very concerned about these launches. As you may remember, the Taepodong-1 launch in, I think, 1998, over-flew Japan and that was a source of great concern to the Japanese and it's one of the things that got them more interested in missile defense. So the fact that a number of these are coming down in the Sea of Japan, even though, admittedly, hundreds of miles away from Japan, is troubling. And they made it very clear in the run-up that this was troubling and indicated that they hoped North Korea would not do this and, if North Korea did, that there ought to be diplomatic consequences.

So I think the Japanese are going to be concerned about it and will probably have some ideas about what the international community ought to do by way of response.

Q Can you say whether you guys are looking to go to the Security Council --

MR. HADLEY: Look, there are a number of options on the diplomacy. One of the things that we are already having lower-level consultations with key allies, particularly those who are with us in the six-party talks. Secretary Rice is going to begin making some calls later this evening. Asia is just waking up, in terms of the Chinese and Japanese and the South Koreans. My South Korean counterpart will be here tomorrow. This will be an interesting subject for that agenda.

There has been discussion, as you know already, that if North Korea went forward it would be appropriate for the Security Council to consider this issue. That will be one of the things that Secretary Rice will be talking to her counterparts about.

So I think you're going to see a lot of diplomatic activity here over the next 24-48 hours.

Q Steve, one more thing. Is this somehow, do you believe, an effort by North Korea to try to take the spotlight off of Iran? And does it affect your diplomatic movements with Iran and all the things that are happening with that?

MR. HADLEY: It's hard to know. As I say, it's very difficult to know what the North Koreans think they are doing this for. Obviously, it is a bit of an effort to get attention, perhaps because so much attention has been focused on the Iranians.

The thing I think we hope to show is that in both cases, Iran and North Korea, even though the constellation of players may be a little different, the international solidarity is the same and the

message that we do not want a nuclear North Korea or a nuclear weapon-armed Iran, that message is the same message, and that the international community is unified in sending that message. So that's what we hope is the lesson that both Iranians and North Koreans will draw from this.

Q Steve, this is Deb from AP.

MR. HADLEY: Hi, Deb.

Q We've got all these senior administration official people talking here. Is there any reason why you can't be on the record, you're the National Security Advisor.

MR. HADLEY: Tony?

MR. SNOW: No, it's fine.

Q Great.

Q Does that change --

Q Mr. Hadley --

Q So are you okay on the record?

MR. HADLEY: About five people spoke at the same time. If there was a question or something we needed to clarify -- Tony, what is the process here. We will do a transcript of this?

MS. PERINO: Yes, we have a steno on.

MR. HADLEY: We've gone from senior administration official, on the record, let us just take a quick look. But, Tony, I didn't hear -- (inaudible) -- anything I was concerned about.

MR. SNOW: No. Dana.

MS. PERINO: Well, Tony, I think you need to make a decision. You started off as a senior administration official; I don't know if you want to change that.

Q I think we can let Snow be as a senior administration official, but this is a serious, diplomatic issue --

MR. SNOW: Yes, I think that's fine.

MR. HADLEY: Let's do that.

Q -- senior person to quote here. And, Steve, you are the National Security Advisor.

MR. SNOW: Deb, you've already won; you don't have to explain further.

Q Can I raise an issue here? Tony, since you were the one who gave us sort of the initial, there were five launches today or, you know, gave us all the timing, can we please simply attribute that to Mr. Hadley, if it's a time -- we can run through them again?

MR. SNOW: Steve, is that fine with you? Do you want to run through the times again.

MR. HADLEY: I can run through what I've got, Tony.

MR. SNOW: Okay. I'll run through what we have --

Q Just so we don't a senior administration official --

MR. SNOW: That's fine. That makes perfect sense.

Okay, launch number one from Kittaeryong, a Scud, launched at 2:33 p.m., eastern time.

Q When you say "Scud," you mean short-range?

MR. HADLEY: It's what's called a Scud-C, as in Charlie, and that would be a short-range ballistic missile, or an SRBM.

MR. SNOW: Launch number two occurring at 3:04 p.m. eastern time, Nodong.

MR. HADLEY: It's a Nodong or a Scud-C. I think we haven't confirmed which it is, so we're still working that one.

MR. SNOW: All right. That was also from Kittaeryong. And number three was the Taepodong-2 at 4:01 p.m. from the Taepodong test facility. And I think you've got the other three. And you may attribute all of those to Steve.

Q Great. And can I get a clarification. Steve, can I get you to say again about the moratorium, specifics about how you consider that violations -- anything more on that?

MR. HADLEY: We'll get you the -- the moratorium was something that they adopted in the wake of the outcry associated and that followed the Taepodong-1 launch. And they basically said that they would not do any further testing, I think it was of the medium and long-range ballistic missiles. We will get clarification on that, on the exact terms of the moratorium. Clearly, the TD-2, the Taepodong-2 launch would be in violation of the moratorium. And this was a moratorium that they adopted I think in 1999 and reaffirmed in 2004.

We also think that the September 2005 agreement that was reached in the six-party talks committed all the parties to the security and enhancing the security of Northeast Asia and, of course, we think that this kind of activity does not enhance the security of Northeast Asia and therefore is inconsistent with at least the spirit and maybe even the letter of the September 2005 agreement.

Q Tony, there was one more thing. We've got you as quoted as saying, "it is a provocation" and that "there is not an immediate threat to the United States."

MR. SNOW: Yes.

Q Are we okay with that one?

MR. SNOW: We're okay with that one.

Q We're okay with you saying --

Q Can we have Hadley say the same thing or --

MS. PERINO: Tony, can I make a recommendation, because we are getting too messy. I would suggest that --

MR. SNOW: Everything on the record?

MS. PERINO: -- the whole briefing is on the record.

MR. SNOW: Okay. Let's just clarify, everything is on the record and you can go from there. My apologies to everybody.

Q You and him?

Q Tony -- about the provocation, but not a threat -- how would you put that?

MR. SNOW: Steve, still here?

MR. HADLEY: What I would say is, look, we have said that this was -- we have been concerned about this as provocative behavior. We've said that, particularly in defiance of the message, the unified message, really, of the international community. So we do consider it provocative behavior.

We're obviously continuing to examine what the profiles and what we know about these launches tells us, particularly about the Taepodong-2 launch, what it tells us about the intentions of the North Koreans. Obviously, you know, a missile that fails after 40 seconds is not a threat to the territory of the United States. But what we want to do, of course, is analyze what we can know about that missile and what it tells us about the intent of the North Koreans. And we're just going to have to do our homework,

do an analysis and see what we can divine about what they had in mind.

Tony, are you comfortable with that?

MR. SNOW: I'm comfortable. Yes, we're on the same page.

Okay, guys, are we good to go?

Q I have one question -- I'm sorry to interrupt. The quote, Tony, that you gave earlier about provocative behavior? I'm --

MR. HADLEY: Can we consider it amended by my quote?

Q Okay, that's fine.

MR. SNOW: I had given both of those points in a separate quote, but I am happy to defer to the National Security Advisor, who has more weight on such matters anyway.

Q Okay. I didn't see it in my notes, so we'll just use Steve's.

MR. SNOW: The earlier quote was given down in the press room; it was not part of this conversation.

Q Okay. And following this report, we'll all get a transcript eventually anyway?

MR. SNOW: Correct, we'll get it out to everybody.

All right. Have a happy 4th, everybody.

END 6:59 P.M. EDT

* The sixth launch has not been confirmed.

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