



Remarks to the Travelling Press on the North Korean Declaration

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Okura Hotel
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SECRETARY RICE: It is my understanding that the North Koreans have now handed over their declaration to the Chinese, as chair of the six-party talks and of the denuclearization working group. We are expecting that declaration and then that the United States – the President will say that he is going to begin the 45-day notification period to Congress to delist North Korea from the terrorism list, and to remove them from the Trading With The Enemies Act.

I want just to emphasize that the nature of this declaration is one in which we believe we have through a verification -- sort of verification principles and a protocol to be worked out -- the means by which to verify the completeness and the accuracy of this document. That verification, obviously, will take some time. But, for instance, in order to verify the plutonium number that the North Koreans have given, we have been given documents, but we also are expecting access to the reactor core, to the waste pool. That just gives you an example of the kind of verification measures that are coming.

This is a good step forward. The United States and its partners are expecting, over the next 45 days, to have North Korean cooperation as we move forward to nail down the elements of verification, and we will act accordingly. I want to emphasize something that I said earlier, which is that this is an important first step, but a first step toward denuclearization, which means an end to – a verifiable end to all North Korean nuclear programs and to their – to understand and to account for their actual nuclear devices or nuclear weapons.

There continue to be questions about the highly enriched uranium program, as well as North Korean proliferation activities. They have acknowledged our concerns and we expect that North Korea understands that it has a responsibility to answer questions and to provide verification concerning what has happened with their HEU program and with their proliferation activities.

We have many issues with North Korea. There continue to be concerns about human rights, about missile proliferation, and there continues to be concern about the Japanese abduction issue. We have made very clear to North Korea that we expect North Korea to treat our ally, Japan, seriously about this very important humanitarian issue, and that we will continue to encourage Japanese and DPRK direct negotiation and discussion on this issue. But the United States will be monitoring those discussions very actively as well.

So with that, let me take a couple questions.

MR. MCCORMACK: First question.

SECRETARY RICE: Matt, you want to lead?

QUESTION: Sure. This is obviously the beginning, right? It's not the --

SECRETARY RICE: Right.

QUESTION: -- the end of it. So in the next 45 days -- or how soon in the 45 days do you expect to be getting access to the reactor core?

SECRETARY RICE: There are verification principles that have been worked out (inaudible) protocol that's worked out that talks about access. I think we're making progress on this. And so I don't mean to suggest that there's a problem here. I think we are making progress; we'll see. I should note the North Koreans have already disabled -- done many disabling activities at Yongbyon. That's a good step, because we'd like to see them out of the plutonium business. We have a lot of questions about a lot of aspects of the North Korean nuclear program. But the plutonium, which we know they can make, which they have made, which they restarted and made more, remains a grave concern for the international community in terms of both its threat to the region and also, frankly, the proliferation risk from having made plutonium.

So, the next 45 days are important, but I don't want to suggest that there are already difficulties. We're making progress and we -- the President -- it's just a 45-day clock until it's effective.

QUESTION: I mean -- and you haven't actually seen the declaration?

SECRETARY RICE: I have not myself. The Chinese have the declaration.

QUESTION: When --

SECRETARY RICE: There have been consultations prior to this, so we know the nature of it. We know generally what's in it. But obviously, it'll be reviewed as well.

QUESTION: Well, when -- is there a time set for the next envoys meeting?

SECRETARY RICE: I don't think that time has been set yet.

QUESTION: Yeah. Have you been invited to visit North Korea by any of the North Koreans?

SECRETARY RICE: I think I was invited. I'm not sure. Look, it's --

QUESTION: To play the piano?

SECRETARY RICE: Pardon me?

QUESTION: To play the piano?

SECRETARY RICE: Oh, to play the piano, all right. It's not time to contemplate that at this point.

Look, there's a – there's a long way to go here. And one thing that I would emphasize is that delisting and having the North Koreans come off TWEA still leaves in place U.S. sanctions, bilateral, multilateral, for proliferation, for human rights. And before we would contemplate anything further, in terms of political – steps for political normalization or economic assistance, I think we'd certainly expect to see more from the North Koreans. So the fact of the matter is that the North Koreans are disabling. They're moving forward on verification. And it's been done without, yet, economic assistance or any major steps on the political front.

Okay.

MR. MCCORMACK: All right. One last one.

SECRETARY RICE: Okay. We'll have one last question. Yes.

QUESTION: Do you regard the North Korean (inaudible) to abandon all the nuclear weapons program with this declaration?

SECRETARY RICE: The North Koreans made the claim or made the commitment to abandon all of their nuclear weapons programs verifiably and thereby to allow the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula during, first, September 2005 and then reiterated it in February of 2007. And this is, then, one of the implementing agreements along the way, step-for-step, action-for-action.

We will see. The North Koreans may or may not intend to fully abandon their nuclear weapons programs. But frankly, this is the only way we're going to find out, if we keep probing, if we keep testing, if we continue to have the North Koreans meet their obligations and we meet ours and, most importantly, doing it in the context of six parties, not one.

And I want to emphasize, because there's been a lot about U.S. bilateral discussions with North Korea; well, if you look at an actual record, you've got, yes, U.S. bilateral discussions with North Korea, but you've also got Chinese. Probably the most active channel is China-North Korea. You've got Japan-North Korea. And you've had Russia-China, Russia-North Korea. Sometimes we find various geometries helpful. We've had trilaterals -- South Korea, Japan, the United States. Sometimes we find various geometries useful within the context of the six-party talks, but all commitments are to the six parties and by the six parties.

Thanks very much.

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