



Briefing on His Recent Travel to the Region and the Six-Party Talks

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MR. CASEY: Good afternoon, everybody. You know, I don't know there's something -- the room seems a little fuller than it did a little while ago this morning. I'm not quite sure why that is.

QUESTION: It has nothing to do with you.

MR. CASEY: Trust me, Matt, yeah, I won't take it personally. But we are very pleased that fresh off his very lengthy journey to East Asia, we do have Assistant Secretary for East Asian Pacific Affairs Chris Hill here to talk to you a little bit about his trip to Mongolia. No, I mean -- (laughter) about his -- about the six-party talks and issues related to North Korea's nuclear program. Appreciate him taking the opportunity to do this and, Chris, the podium's all yours.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Okay. Thanks a lot, Tom. Well, I've just been in the region for about ten days. We had extensive consultations with all the parties, except for the Russians, and that's something I intend to do on the telephone with Ambassador Losyukov. And during the visit, as you all know, I spent some 22 hours in Pyongyang doing essentially the same thing I did with the others, which was to discuss the way ahead.

I think the next couple weeks are going to be a very important period for the six-party process. We have, as of today, as many of you heard the North Koreans are -- have invited the international monitors to come in and negotiate the terms by which they will monitor the shut down of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. They'll obviously be going into a lot of details about which -- actually which facilities. There's, as you know, the two key facilities there, a nuclear reactor and a reprocessing facility.

So assuming all goes well this week, and I don't why I make that assumption because usually in the six-party process if there's a problem out there then the problem will arise. But assuming all goes well in the next -- I think it's a four-day visit, we will then look forward toward the shutdown beginning at some point after that. We would then hope to have a six-party meeting of some kind, head of delegations, informal, formal, probably in the second week in July. Again, I -- this is going to be up to the Chinese who are going to be consulting with all the parties, but I would think at some point during the week of July 10th. And what we would be trying to do is to plop the next set of initiatives after the shutdown of the complex and begin the process of sequencing additional economic assistance and additional -- what we'd look for is the full declaration of North Korean programs, North Korean nuclear programs, to be abandoned pursuant to the September '05 agreement and then the disabling of the reactor.

Now, disabling has got to be defined. But essentially what it involves is making it so that the reactor cannot be brought back on line without an enormous repair bill. And I think there are a number of ways you can disable a reactor. This is going to be something that technical people will be talking to other technical people about, but obviously the more extensive the disabling, the better from our point of view.

We would hope once we get into the disabling phase that we could also do something that is called for in the September '05 agreement which is to begin a peace process on the Korean Peninsula among directly affected parties. And our definition of that -- I think everyone's definition of that would be the U.S. and China and the two Koreans.

So we have a long way to go. What we're looking for in terms of shutting down this reactor or shutting down this complex in Yongbyon is just the first step of many steps. But if all goes well, we would hope that by the end of the calendar year '07 we will have the facility shut down and disabled. We would have a peace process, peace mechanism talks underway in the Korean Peninsula. We will have had a six-party ministerial and a way charted that would lead to some kind of Northeast Asian security process; a means by which countries in the region can really talk to each other in a multilateral forum. We would like to see additional meetings of the working groups, including the two bilateral working groups, the U.S.-DPRK Bilateral Working Group and the Japan-DPRK Bilateral Working Group, both so that there would be progress made in the normalization process with the understanding that the full normalization will not take place until there's full denuclearization. So we have a lot of work to do, but I think what we're working on right now I think is a very important step which is to shut down the facility and prevent the production of additional plutonium.

Looking into '08, what we would do is tackle end game issues. And a major issue for the end game, of course, is the complete denuclearization which would be the abandonment of fissile material that the DPRK has already produced and finally -- and the abandonment of all weapons or explosive devices that they have and that that would lead -- and all of those things would lead to a final cross recognition or normalization in the region. So a lot of work to do. I think we're going to sort of -- within my shop this week we'll be discussing what we might start doing next week. I think we'll have some -- a lot of consultations with our six-party partners and take it from here. So with that introduction, I'll go to questions.

QUESTION: Assuming that all goes well, to use your words, in this coming -- and you say you would expect to have the envoy level six-party talks in the second week of July, one is that -- is it envisioned sometime after that and perhaps as early as the end of the month, perhaps around the ASEAN, the regional forum meeting, that there could be the six-party ministerial?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Yes.

QUESTION: And two -- sorry?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Yes.

QUESTION: Yes.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: That's what we're kind of looking at, I mean, I can't say whether it's at the ASEAN regional forum or just before or just after, but some time in that timeframe.

QUESTION: Okay. And then, two, is it your -- what was -- is it your impression from having been -- just been in Pyongyang in dealing face-to-face with these people, even though you've met them elsewhere before that the North Koreans are really serious and really willing to go about this this time and that there isn't -- that, you know, you talked about the problems, if there's a problem to be had -- if there were a problem out there, it's always going to come up. Do you have any kind of level -- confidence level about this?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I'm -- yeah, I'm certainly proceeding on the assumption that they're serious. They told us that as soon as they confirm that their funds are in their bank account, they would issue a statement, which they did today -- last night. So I have no choice but to proceed on the basis that they are serious as we are. Things have -- do come up and have come up and we can expect them to come up in the future, but, you know, I think we're going to try to move along. And again, it's step by step with the understanding that every step afterwards gets more difficult than the one before.

QUESTION: Can I follow up on North Korea?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Yeah.

QUESTION: Yeah. What gives you the rationale that you can trust the North Koreans? I mean, what makes you think that North Korea isn't going to hold up things at every kind of benchmark that you go along, I mean, if they don't get every drop of their fuel and that could take months? And I mean, are you going to exhibit the same amount of patience that you exhibited before? You were extremely patient with the North Koreans, with the understanding that you thought it would work itself out. But I mean, are you going to continue to let them dictate the kind of terms and timeframe of the agreement? And I have just another --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I mean, the timeframe issue is a concern. I mean, the way -- we had this on a step-by-step basis, meaning that no one is frontloading all the -- no one is taking all their actions ahead of the other. So it's true that this first step has taken far longer than any of us anticipated and certainly longer than the February agreement called for. On the other hand, the North Koreans had not received any of their funds, had not even had access to these funds from the Macau Bank; and two, have not received a drop of the 50,000 tons of fuel oil. So there's no question that in insisting on having their funds in a bank account, they were able to hold up the pace of the thing, but I don't see them as having benefited from this delay. So -- well, as we go forward, you know, if it's in our country's interest for me to be "impatient", fine, I'll be impatient. But I think it was in our interest to be patient here and try to get through this and we'll have to figure that out as we go along.

QUESTION: I just have another quick one. There's been some talk about as you do the dismantling and the -- that perhaps the U.S. would engage in some kind of buyback program of North Korean weapons --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Oh, I saw that, yeah. Yeah, I saw that. Well, you know --

QUESTION: Is that something you're willing to consider?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, look, we have to have a serious talk about the whole issue of highly enriched uranium. We know that they've made purchases that are entirely consistent with the highly enriched uranium program. So we -- one way or the other, we're going to have to get to the bottom of it. And we need clarity on this -- not just some clarity, but complete clarity. We need to know what this was all about and how far did they get if they enriched uranium? That obviously needs to be included in the declaration. This equipment needs to be included in the declaration of nuclear programs that they would abandon, pursuant to the agreement. So we have made very clear on many occasions that we have to get to the bottom of this and we'll do that. At this point, I can't tell you how we're going to eventually deal with it.

QUESTION: Why didn't you seek to get to the bottom of that in your visit in Pyongyang? Was there any discussion of the HEU present?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: It's -- we discussed everything.

QUESTION: And what did they tell you about the HEU program?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, James, you know, these are diplomatic discussions and if I wanted to have them with you, I would have, you know, gotten you a State Department badge and brought you along and you could have sat there. But you know, these were discussions we were having internally and we had a discussion of all the nuclear programs and all means all.

QUESTION: Did they admit they have such a program?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: James, we had a very good discussion about it. I'm not going to get into the specifics of it, except to say that they acknowledge that this issue must be resolved to mutual satisfaction.

QUESTION: Let me try one last stab at it from a different direction, if I might.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: It won't work any better than -- (laughter) -- (inaudible).

QUESTION: When you say things like: We need to know how far it got, whether they enriched uranium or not, that suggests that you are proceeding in this from a disadvantage insofar as you don't know -- as Donald Rumsfeld once famously said -- what you don't know. So how will you ever be in a position to verify that if there is such a program that all of it has, in fact, been dismantled?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: What was the Donald Rumsfeld quote? (Laughter.)

QUESTION: That you don't know what you don't know. I mean, if you're operating from such a blind position, with respect to the parameters and the scope of this program, how will you ever be in a position to verify that it's actually gone?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: You're making an assumption that we're operating from a blind position. And actually, we knew of some things and I can't share them all with you because sources and methods are at issue, but I can assure you we know some things. And what we know, we need to discuss and we need to figure out how far they got. So don't assume that we're operating from a "blind position." Presumably, there are some things that we don't know. And in terms of getting complete clarity, we need those issues, those blanks filled in. But we will do this. We're not going to end up with a situation -- denuclearization where the problem of highly enriched uranium purchases has somehow been pushed under the rug. We have to get clarity on that. Everything needs to be out there.

QUESTION: Do you think that the program is much further along than it was when Jim Kelly first confronted the North Koreans about it in 2002?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: You know, I'm not an intelligence analyst and if I were, I probably wouldn't be answering that. But I would refer you to Joe DeTrani's comments about high confidence of ongoing programs, versus moderate confidence. But I don't really want to go beyond what Joe DeTrani has said.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Can you talk a little bit about your -- the decision to go to North Korea, how that sort of developed the timeline? I know it was very quick. And also tagging on to that, are you confident that you have the support of the vice president and his office, as you negotiate with North Korea? You know, there are some that say that the vice president's office is very skeptical of these efforts and that you and Secretary Rice are trusting the North Koreans too much?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Okay. I'm not aware of that, but I'll say that in going forward, I did so at the direction of the Secretary of State who in turn, I think received her direction. So I don't -- I am not aware of any split decision here. I think it was concluded that this was the right thing to do. We have come through a period of

lengthy inactivity where -- at which frankly the longer it went on, I mean, the more I think it imperiled the entire process. So I think the process is back on track with the understanding that, you know, this is just the first step and we have a long way to go.

QUESTION: This issue of going to Pyongyang came up earlier in the week last week. As I was on the trip, we got word from the DPRK through our New York channel that they wanted me to come to Pyongyang as part of the ongoing consultations. I phoned home. (Laughter.) And the -- I got word back that I should proceed with it. We organized a transport and we left early Thursday morning, stopping in -- we actually flew out of Osan Air Base to -- in Korea to Pyongyang. We stayed, I think, about 20 hours. I think we got there about something like one or two o'clock in the afternoon and left around ten o'clock the following morning. I didn't make any request to see people. I just responded to the request from my six-party counterpart that I come for consultations. And we spent most of the time there in a conference room in the foreign ministry, which is just off of Kim Il Sung Square. And the next morning I met with the new North Korean Foreign Minister.

Yes.

QUESTION: Sir, is there any question with the North Koreans -- they've had recent missile tests, especially over the Sea of Japan. In any way are you talking to them concerning that? And also, Senator Nunn and Senator Lugar have had a very active NTI program. Is there any question about getting a similar program in to work with the North Koreans?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: With regard to the missile test being conducted by the North Korean army, we have made very clear that these are not helpful to our process. They appear to be an ongoing -- ongoing military tests. They don't appear to be politically motivated and they are -- they don't appear to be related to the six-party process or to our overall diplomatic efforts. I would draw a contrast between those and the longer-range tests of last July 4th.

I think we -- you know, we do need to be in consultations with the Hill and we are in consultations with the Hill about what types of programs may be appropriate as we get further into the process. I do want to stress it's step by step and if we got further into the process that would be really good news, and I hope that we would be able to, you know, make use of either existing programs or programs that could be brought online for this. But right now, it's just step by step, one day at a time. We're trying to get this thing shut down, move on to the next phase.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: Thank you. North Korea has agreed to shut down their nuclear reactors. Do they (inaudible) in accordance with the United States (inaudible)?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I'm sorry, I didn't get that.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I'm sorry, what is the question? I couldn't understand you. I really --

QUESTION: I have question. North Korea has agreed to shut down their nuclear reactors. I mean, I ask the question today this (inaudible) in accordance with United States (inaudible) that is CVID?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Okay, I think I understand. I mean, what they are saying, what the North Koreans --

QUESTION: CVID mean, you know, complete --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Yeah, complete, verifiable --

QUESTION: Verifiable, (inaudible), dismantling --

QUESTION: What is your understanding of the question to be, please?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Have the North Koreans agreed to shut down the program consistent with U.S. objectives as defined in CVID?

QUESTION: Yes.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think the -- it's our view that the September agreement which envisions their abandoning all programs, all weapons, returning to the NPT, is such a commitment. And it's a commitment they have restated on several occasions. So the answer to your question is yes.

QUESTION: On this trip, when you were discussing with the Foreign Minister or others this -- you know, talks of moving towards a peace process or some broader sort of defense architecture for the region, did you get a sense on what the North Koreans -- do they have any vision on how they see moving forward? Or, I mean, did you get at least a sense on how they'd see a peace agreement?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: There are two things here. One is a peace mechanism on the Korean Peninsula. The second is participating in a broader dialogue forum on Northeast Asia. During the conversations in Pyongyang, I found they were -- we engaged on both subjects. They did not come forward with ideas of their own, but we engaged on both of these subjects. And they indicated support for these, but we don't have -- I cannot tell you with any degree of specificity how they envision the -- how they envision their participation in these. So -- but there was a discussion about them.

Yes.

QUESTION: Just for clarification, and you alluded to it in your opening remarks, but does the -- the U.S. is interested mostly in the shutdown of the two main facilities at Yongbyon, not every building that's on the site?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I mean, we want to shut down the ability to produce and process plutonium. But I don't want to get into the technicalities of that because we have an IAEA team going in to do precisely that. But the point is we don't want a situation where -- I mean, we want a situation where once it's done there will be no more plutonium produced there.

QUESTION: Chris, this wasn't the first time that the North Koreans wanted you to go to Pyongyang, and you had said previously that you wouldn't go while Yongbyon is operating, which probably wasn't the case in this. But is there -- my question is is there -- was there something that you thought you can only achieve if you go to Pyongyang rather than talking to them any place else?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I think what I've always said is if it's in my -- if it's in our interest to go there, we should go there; we, the U.S., should send someone there. And so we've just come through a very difficult period where I think it was very important to make sure that these next two weeks are teed up, and I would say beyond the two weeks. But to make sure that we're clear on the elements for what will be the -- I think an important year, that is, disabling the facilities, getting clarity

on the HEU and having a full and concise statement, nuclear declaration, which by the way, has to include precisely how much fissile material they have, so there's a lot there. So we're -- I think really on the edge of all this and I think the judgment was that this was the right time to go. This was the right time to accept the invitation to go.

I must say prior to the invitation I'd been thinking that the right time to go would have been after the shutdown. But again, I think I've always said we should go when it's in our interest to go and I think a judgment was made and I contributed to that in the sense of I made a recommendation. But I think the judgment was that this was -- is the critical moment to go there and have these discussions so we did that.

QUESTION: Just to follow up quickly. Do you envision -- you talked about your objectives before the end of the year. Do you envision only one ministerial meeting before the end of the year which will -- as you say, will probably be around ASEAN?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: You know, I can't really -- Nick, I can't really say that there would only be one meeting. But it's never been done before, so let's see how it goes and then let's assess it and let's see what's useful to do in the future.

Frankly, I'd like to see the thing catch on. I mean, I'd like to see some decisions about creating some sort of Northeast Asian forum. I'd like to see a four-party peace process get going. I'd like to see some beginnings of architecture in Northeast Asia. And you know, I hope this meeting is a real catalyst for that and that perhaps we'd have additional meetings after.

But at this point, I think it's -- would be getting ahead of ourselves, so let's see what we can get accomplished. And by the way, this meeting needs to be well planned and we don't have a lot of time, which is why there's some pressure to have a six-party meeting as soon as possible. But at the same time, I don't want a six-party meeting, heads of delegation meeting, where we're talking about Yongbyon shutdown. So I'd kind like Yongbyon shut down to happen before we meet just because if it hasn't happened we'll end up talking about it.

But I don't want it to sound like it's a condition for meeting -- we will not meet until there's a Yongbyon shut down. I don't think that type of verbiage is necessarily what we need. So we are really compressed for time right now.

Yeah.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) pass through Japan both before and after the (inaudible) yesterday and Japan is known to have some apprehension about -- being an outlier or being a bit harder line. They have their own -- they have the abductees. They also have elections. How did you address some of the Japanese concerns in Tokyo or are those concerns real?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I mean, I think Japan does have some special interests in this whole thing just as every country does. I mean, that's the amazing thing about the six-party process. Everyone has a sort of different look at some of the things. And for Japan, you know, this abduction issue is enormous in Japan. I mean, enormous not only with the government but with the general public. So, you know, we can't be pretending that that issue doesn't exist. So I think what has been important for us is to work very closely with the Japanese. I mean, the first call I made after coming out of North Korea when I got to Osan was to Ken Sasae to tell him, you know, how the meeting went -- my Japanese counterpart. And so -- and we had good talks -- I lose track -- I think it was Saturday morning with the Japanese. So I think we need to stay in very close contact with them. You know, I made this clear to the North Koreans that Japan is a very important relationship to us and -- the world's second-largest economy -- and I would think it should be a very important relationship to the North Koreans. And so I hope I don't need to give them pep talks on the necessity of moving along and with the Japan relationship and they're going to have to deal with some of the issues that the Japanese are concerned about.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Two things. Did you discuss the prospect of Secretary Rice going to North Korea?

ASSISTANT Secretary Hill: No. No, it never came up.

QUESTION: Is that something you're going to think about? I think she mentioned in February that she would go also maybe.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Did she say that? (Laughter)

QUESTION: I might be mistaken. She left open the possibility --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I don't recall that. I mean, that is not an issue that came up. What did come up was the issue of the six-party ministerial and there she would have an opportunity to meet her DPRK counterpart.

QUESTION: Did you raise any humanitarian issues while you were there?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No, we didn't. They did tell us that when they announced the -- that the funds from Macau and their bank account that they would announce them; that they would be used for humanitarian purposes, but we didn't talk about humanitarian assistance at that time.

Yeah.

Let's take a few more. It's okay.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Was the HEU program ever discussed in the six-party talks? And what was "North Korea's last promise" when this question was asked?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, when the HEU program has come up, the North Koreans have said that they understand this is an important issue that needs to be resolved to mutual satisfaction, whatever that means. That's different from previous positions, which are -- we don't know what you're talking about and if you have some evidence, give it to us and we'll look into it.

QUESTION: And just a technical question here on the six-party ministerial. When you said before or after the ASEAN Regional Forum in Manila?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Before or after. I'm not sure of the date, which is why I don't want to say it's in Manila. I don't want to say it's before. I don't want to say it's after. I'm just not sure -- at some point.

QUESTION: And let's assume, if it's not in Manila, it could be somewhere in Northeast Asia?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I -- yes. If it's not Manila, it would be somewhere in Northeast Asia. You know, obviously -- the obvious place that comes to mind is

Beijing. So but again, I don't want to announce where it is, because I don't know.

QUESTION: Are you -- very quick one. Are you considering like making this a regular stop on your consultations?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: We didn't discuss regular --

QUESTION: But do you envision that? I mean --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I envision making additional trips at some point, as our interests dictate.

QUESTION: Okay.

QUESTION: Was there anything North Korea demanded on the U.S. for request to shutting down the Yongbyon facilities?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No. No.

QUESTION: Just to follow up on your answer that you just provided about the HEU program, do you take what you heard to be a formal acknowledgement of the existence of a program?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No. No, I take it for what it is. I mean, what I feel is important for us to do is to make clear we're not reaching any deal unless this is resolved. We've got to get clarity on this. And so you know, unlike many things in life, where you can take care of them in one conversation, I don't think this is one of them. I think you have to kind of keep coming back, keep explaining why this is important and I think eventually we will get some clarity because we can't walk away from this.

QUESTION: Has any intelligence been provided to (inaudible)?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: James, I don't want to talk about intelligence.

QUESTION: I didn't ask you to describe the intelligence, I'm just asking if anyone has ever, to your knowledge, been presented to the North Koreans?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I'm not in a position to discuss intelligence.

Yes.

QUESTION: Were you hopeful to meet with Kim Jong-il and do you think that eventually you'll have to actually make some more progress?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: They are very good note takers there. And so I -- (laughter) -- better than you all. And so I have every reason to believe that things that were said in the Foreign Ministry got back to Chairman Kim Jong-il. But who we meet with at some point in the future, I'm not in a position to say, except that, you know, I'm guided by the need to get through these tasks, to get through these steps. And whatever we need to do, wherever we need to go, whoever we need to talk to, we need to accomplish these steps.

QUESTION: Are you going to visit North Korea again after shutting down and the sealing process?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I don't know. No plans right now.

Yeah.

QUESTION: You said North Korea needs to realize the importance of its relationship with Japan, its abduction issue. Does that mean that you don't feel Japan's position is going to be a problem as much as North Korea's unwillingness to meet Japan halfway?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think we can work through this. This -- yeah, it's a tough one and there's a lot of bad blood on this. But I think we can work through this.

QUESTION: So you're not worried about Japan's -- so far a refusal to provide economic aid as being a problem moving forward?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: We can work through this.

Yeah, Mike.

QUESTION: I mean, as you know, working with North Korea, you're always looking at where the next stumbling block might be. And going into the next phase, there's three areas that seem a particular challenge; coming up with a declaration of all their nuclear weapons; the definition for disabling Yongbyon and; I think also one -- which he just brought up is the Japanese Working Group getting that to -- where they can actually talk to each other.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Yeah.

QUESTION: How do you see those three in terms of which is going to be the most difficult and how would you rank those challenges?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think -- one that, I think we can figure out is the disabling issue. I think that's not going to be as challenging as the other two. I think the full declaration issue is going to be upon us because that's one of the first things we need to do in this second phase. And the key question there is going to be the HEU issue. So we need to start getting somewhere with these conversations on HEU very soon, because if we don't have clarity on that then we really don't have a declaration.

And I'm sorry, the third one was the abduction issue?

QUESTION: Getting the Japanese Working Group -- Japanese-North Korean Working Group on track where they can actually talk to each other.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: You know, I think -- well, it's a tough problem; don't get me wrong. But I would put that in the middle of the other two.

Okay.

QUESTION: Just a quick follow-up on alluding to future meetings and making things happen. Did you ask the North Koreans at some point when it was right to come to the states for discussions or --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No. No, we didn't discuss further schedules. We discussed the need to be in touch bilaterally within the framework of the six-party process. For example, before we have a six-party meeting we try to have bilateral meetings with everybody and so we discussed the need to have another one before the six-party meeting.

Remember this next six-party meeting we've got to figure out what our ministers are going to do because the ministers will not have a lot of time, so we have to plan that. And then we have to work on the implementation of this next phase; that is, the declaration and the disabling and there's a lot of fuel oil involved there and there's a question of how quickly the fuel oil can arrive in North Korea because they have a limit of some 50,000 tons. So that means we will be using fuel oil equivalents, so in some cases there might be a provision of electricity rather than fuel oil. So you know, that has to be worked out in a working group. So that's a tough one -- just logistically a tough one. So you know, there are -- I think we're going to have a very busy July in trying to figure some of this stuff out.

QUESTION: But is the six-party (inaudible) like -- the New York channel is that kind of not really all that necessary anymore? You can just pick up the phone and call up your counterparts?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: We use the six-party -- we use the New York channel. It's mainly for messages, but we use it a lot. We used it last night because it was, frankly, it was 9 o'clock last night and I was wondering -- I was thinking to myself it's 10 o'clock in the morning in North Korea, where's the statement. So we checked at 9 o'clock last night. And since I'm totally jetlagged, I was up every hour through the night and I think I woke up at 3 o'clock and got the statement then on my Blackberry.

QUESTION: You just mentioned something which seems to me a prime --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Jetlag?

QUESTION: No, no -- (laughter) -- it seems to me could be the next lingering problem that turns into, you know (inaudible) disaster.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: (Inaudible). You don't have to --

QUESTION: Well, no, but the same thing about providing electricity instead of the fuel oil because they don't have the capacity to take it. Isn't this just waiting to be the next BDA?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No, we can work through that. I'm -- it's a pain in the neck but we can --

QUESTION: Do you have -- have you talked about this with them and said, look, there may be -- you have a capacity problem. We might look for alternatives.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Yes, exactly.

QUESTION: And they understand that?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Oh, totally, totally and I was kind of pleased because they came forward on it. I said, look, when we have the -- I mean, I'll tell you precisely. I told them when we have the energy working group, you need to some people who really know the energy sector and we'll send some experts. But I said, for example, if you're talking about fuel oil and you're saying you've got a 50,000 ton capacity per month then that's too many months. And so -- and then the North Korean side said, yes, but of course we're talking about fuel oil equivalents so there are other ways to do that besides providing fuel oil, such as provision of electricity or refurbishment of some electricity plant or something like that. So I think we can work that through.

But my point is it's technical and it takes some time.

QUESTION: Can I reverse that question?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Reverse that question, that's -- not in my state of mind.

QUESTION: I know what you mean, I'm sorry. Do the North Koreans have to complete the declaration before the fuel oil starts to kick in -- electricity?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: You asked the question of the sequencing --

QUESTION: Yeah.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: -- of our obligations and their obligations and, yeah, we've got to work that out.

QUESTION: Right. So that hasn't been determined yet whether --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No.

QUESTION: Thank you.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No, again, but we can do that.

QUESTION: North Korea's probably consumed 80 percent of your work time and a lot of your waking and non-waking hours for the last three years and I think it was your first visit this time. Can you tell us what it felt like to touch down in that country?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Stop smiling because there was nothing to smile about. (Laughter.) No, it was good. It was good to get there and, you know, have eyes on -- on what you correctly determined is a place that does take up a lot of time. It was -- I mean, I'd love to give you a travel log, but I don't want to make difficult any further six-party talks or create another reason for delay in the six-party process. But it was a -- we were treated very hospitably. We were not -- we went right to meetings. There were no ceremonies. There were no tourist events beyond a sort of windshield tour at one point.

If you want to go to a city without traffic that's your place. I have never seen anything quite like it. There's just no traffic so you can really get around in Pyongyang. Every -

- we again were on trips on main boulevards most of the time, so I am not pretending that I've seen North Korea by going on some main boulevards. But the main boulevards we were on you could -- you know, I think we went past the university, we went past a lot of apartment buildings. They were all -- they (inaudible) electricity, for example. We -- this -- you know, as someone who's been in capitals in Eastern Europe during -- you know, I was in Poland in the early '80s and various places, it would be pretty familiar to you if you had been in those kinds of places at that kind of time.

QUESTION: So no effort has been made in your discussions with the North Koreans to prove the existence of the HEU program. You've just been asserting this fact and getting whatever answers you get from them?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No, James, that's not the way I put it. That's not the way I put it at all. I've made quite an effort to make it very clear that as we go forward in this process, and we are getting to crunch time because of the declaration. The declaration is key for the HEU, that we need to have clarity and that doesn't mean some clarity. That means clarity. We need to know what has been going on there. So I have made that abundantly clear and continue to do so. And I do believe that when we get to this issue of the declaration, we will have clarity or we won't have a declaration. So I'm not prepared at this point -- I mean, we have some information but we need to match it up against the information they give us and we need to have a discussion. And I think there's going to have to be a technical discussion on some of this.

I mean, I wasn't there to negotiate HEU. I mean, there are a lot of people in this building who know it far better than I do. But I was there to make very clear to them that as we go forward we are going to have to resolve that issue.

Well, thank you -- thank you very much.

QUESTION: Thank you. Welcome back.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Thanks.

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