



Special Briefing  
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## Briefing by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs and Head of the U.S. Delegation to the Six-Party Talks Christopher R. Hill on Six-Party Talks Update

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**ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL:** Hi. It's good to see most of you. (Laughter.)

I will be heading off to the region next week for a sort of quick round of consultations and to attend what -- to attend the six-party plenary session, which we expect to happen sometime in the middle of next week. We haven't yet -- it hasn't been announced yet, but we understand the Chinese hosts are talking to various -- the various participants in the six-party talks to try to schedule a date. And so we expect it to be sometime in the middle of next week, so I will head to the region in the beginning of next week.

I plan to make a visit to Japan, and while in Beijing I will meet with my South Korean counterpart and I will also be meeting with other counterparts in anticipation of the six-party meeting.

I haven't -- we're still working out the details of this -- of the itineraries, so I think Ken can help you with that. But I think the -- I think the first stop will, in fact, turn out to be Beijing and -- where I'll meet with my counterparts, and then coming out I would stop in Japan toward the latter part of the week and even the weekend. So we're -- it's a work in progress. So for those of you who follow this, I'm looking at Tomo there -- for those of you who follow this very closely, you'd better be in touch with Ken because we've changed the itinerary a few times in the last few days.

So I've been on the phone a lot in the last few days with Sung Kim, who has been in Pyongyang with this group of nuclear experts. And Sung is planning to -- or at least the U.S. group will leave Saturday, or planning to leave Saturday morning, and to travel down to the DMZ and cross over into South Korea. They have had a series of visits to -- especially to the Yongbyon complex and then met on Friday, today, with the DPRK experts and they've gone over the scope of ideas for how we can get through the process of disabling.

For those of you who don't live and sleep and dream this stuff, let me explain that in -- our concern in North Korea is the facility in Yongbyon where they actually have been producing the plutonium. It doesn't mean that Yongbyon is the only nuclear facility -- that is, facility where there are nuclear programs going on -- but it is the only facility to our knowledge where plutonium is being or has been produced. And so even though as we go through the process of getting the full list of North Korean facilities, for example, research is done in various other places, you know, high explosive testing in various places, that the -- with respect to the actual production of plutonium it takes place in Yongbyon. And, therefore, as we look to begin a disablement program, with respect to Yongbyon, we don't have to wait for a declaration that that is a nuclear site because we already know that it's a nuclear site.

So the -- this team of experts, which included participants from the three nuclear weapons states -- Russia, China, and the U.S. -- looked at essentially five facilities in Yongbyon, two of which are not operational because they haven't been -- come close to completion; that is the 50-megawatt reactor and the 200-megawatt. So their time in Yongbyon was very much focused on the other three which have been in production; that is the fuel fabrication plant where you prepare the fuel for the actual reactor. And then they visited the 5-megawatt reactor which has been in operation for many -- for several years now. And they also visited and had an extensive walk through and worked with North Korean experts in the reprocessing facility, and that's where you take the spent fuel rods from the reactor and you reprocess them into plutonium. So these three facilities are the three facilities that have been the sort of main, or primarily responsible for the -- North Korea's plutonium nuclear program.

In addition, of course, we have continued to work with the North Koreans on our concern about their uranium enrichment which is of course another way to produce fissile material. That was not the object of this particular expert trip, but it is something that all have agreed must be resolved by the end of this year in terms of including it in a declaration, assuming that is appropriate, which we believe it is, and then disabling whatever uranium enrichment program there is.

So I talked to the Director of the Korea Desk Sung Kim several times about his trip. In going into the reprocessing facility, for example, these experts had to put on several layers of clothing, specialized clothing, to guard against contamination and it was -- so they had to sort of walk and talk and study things in rather difficult surroundings under these sort of rubberized suits. So it was, you know, for some of them -- several of them are scientists, but in the case of Sung Kim, we're talking about a career diplomat who, you know, took the Foreign Service exam without the expectation he'd be wearing rubber suits. But they have been able to work very closely with the North Koreans, enough so that we believe there's a basis for sitting down in the plenary and now working out with some precision precisely what we're going to -- how we're going to disable these facilities. So they've been talking about that and I look -- and they will report to the six parties when the meeting is convened. And on the basis of their report to the six parties, we will then try -- in the six parties -- we will then try to draw up a sort of a work plan for -- which would get us to the end of the calendar year '07 and would result in the full declaration of their nuclear programs and the disablement of nuclear programs.

So that's what I'll be doing next week. I'm hopeful that the actual six-party meeting, if it -- for example, gets going on Wednesday, of course, this is up to the Chinese host, we would hope that we're talking a three-day period, not a three-week period. But for us, it's -- to get through disablement is a very important step. You recall in the Agreed Framework back in '02 from the time that they -- the DPRK expelled the inspectors who were there and removed the seals from the facilities, they were able to get the facility working in a matter of weeks. And of course, the purpose of disablement is to make sure it cannot be working for several years. And so it would be, I think, a major step in the fulfillment of the goal which is complete denuclearization. So with those sort of introductory comments, go to some questions.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Can you shed any light on the extent to which you believe North Korea may have provided any sort of nuclear advice, technology, assistance to Syria and whether the reports about this, the published reports about this this week have made more complicated your diplomacy and given you any pause in terms of pursuing this path?

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL:** Well, first of all, I've certainly seen the reports. You know, I'm not in a position to talk about specifics or confirm or deny intelligence type things. But in terms of the effect of these reports on what we're doing, I mean, the reason we have a six-party process and the reason we have put together a number of pretty serious countries in this process is to make sure that the North Koreans get out of the nuclear business and that has been -- that is the goal of this process. And we have always been concerned -- well, we've been concerned about a number of things. We've been concerned about the stability in the region, what a North Korean program -- nuclear program could mean for the region, but -- yeah, we've always been concerned about the issue of proliferation.

And so when you see news reports of this kind -- I mean, for me, it simply is a -- you know, an important reminder of the need to accelerate the process that we're already engaged in and to push for what we've -- what we've already agreed to do, which is to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that, of course, involves any issues of proliferation. So as far as I'm concerned, it's simply a -- it's something that we should -- it does not change the goal that we are -- we are aiming for and has been -- you know, our concerns about proliferation have always been a part of the six-party process and they'll continue to be.

And when we get to the end of the process, that is, complete fulfillment, I mean, what we would all -- what we would expect in the context of complete fulfillment is denuclearization and no proliferation.

Let me go for some geographic -- yes -- yeah.

**QUESTION:** My name is (inaudible) with China Press. I know you just came from a meeting with Mr. Chen Yunlin and did he reiterate Chinese willing to cooperate with the United States on North Korea while telling the United States that China may take actions in the coming UN conference to push UN further clarify Taiwan's status? How do you respond to that?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, as you know, he is in the State Council the minister responsible for Taiwan affairs. He comes here, he visits Washington from time to time. I think I saw him, I think, about a year ago and so I just saw him, actually, a few minutes ago. He is responsible for Taiwan affairs and so we had a very, very good exchange of views on the whole issue of cross-straits.

With respect to the -- you know, issue of -- you know, the broader issue of cross-straits, it was an exchange of views that I think would be very familiar to anyone. I mean, we have a very clear policy on that that we've set out on many occasions. China also has a pretty clear policy on it. With respect to this issue of the referendum and those matters, I would encourage you to look up on our website Deputy Assistant Secretary Tom Christensen's speech that he recently gave on this subject which reflects U.S. Government views on that.

We -- these issues are not linked to the North Korean nuclear issue. We, I think, had a brief discussion of that, but it was not connected at all, it was -- to Taiwan.

Yes, Glenn.

**QUESTION:** Just to follow on Arshad's question. First of all, today, there was a -- official -- State Department official named Andrew Semmel who said that we know there are North Koreans in Syria, indications they do have something going on there. And I just wondered if that is, to your knowledge, a correct statement.

And secondly, in the declaration that you're expecting at the end of the year, would that have to include information on whether or not they have transferred any nuclear expertise or nuclear technology to other countries?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** First of all, with respect to that, I saw the press report on that statement. You know, I think it came out of Rome. Andy works here so why don't you ask him when he's back.

With respect to the declaration, we would need to know all -- what all of their programs are and obviously, any proliferation. So at the end of all this, we would expect to have a pretty clear idea of whether they have engaged in proliferation in other countries.

So I can assure you we follow these things very closely and a lot of what we do in the six parties is addressing precisely that.

Helene.

**QUESTION:** Chris, you said earlier that the North Korea-Syria reports that have been coming out this week does not change the goal of what you are trying to do. Are you satisfied at this point that North Korea is not engaged in selling any nuclear material to Syria?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, first of all I've seen those stories. I'm really not in a position to comment on those stories. All I just want to say is we -- the issue of proliferation of nuclear, you know, materials and nuclear facilities and programs, that sort of thing is very much what the -- part of what the six-party talks are all about. And it's -- as I said, we're concerned about stability in the region, we're concerned about stability on the Korean Peninsula, but we're also concerned -- we've been concerned about proliferation. If you look at any of our public pronouncements on why -- you know, why the six-party talks, why we engage such a -- sort of why we have helped construct such a broad platform is to deal with precisely that sort of issue.

So again, going back to Glenn's point, you know, we have to have clarity on all of their nuclear programs.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** What do you answer to the critics coming from the right of the political spectrum, saying that you shouldn't keep on engaging with North Korea while this is not resolved?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I don't know. If I spent my time answering all the critics, I wouldn't get any work done. But you know, I think what we're trying to do is deal with a tough problem and we're trying to put together the right countries around the table to deal with it. You know, they've been engaged in -- the North Koreans have been engaged in nuclear technology for a long time. It's 40 years. Getting someone to give up a 40-year habit is not easy. So we think we've got the right people around the table. We think the format is the right thing. We think we're engaging the right issues in terms of not only dealing with the nuclear issue but trying to broaden it out to deal with regional security issues, to create these future structures such as Northeast Asian security mechanism, to deal with the actual issue of replacing the armistice on the Korean Peninsula with a sturdier and more durable peace process. So you know, we think we have the right mechanism and so when you hear press -- when you read press reports of this kind, it's just for me another incentive to keep on working and see if we can make progress on it.

James.

**QUESTION:** Chris, I have two questions. One is about the declaration, but before we go there I'd like to ask about the question of disablement. Earlier, at an earlier period of the six-party talks, U.S. officials spoke repeatedly about the need for full, complete and irreversible -- irreversible dismantlement --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- of North Korea's nuclear apparatus.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** We're not there yet. Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Now we're talking about disablement --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** No, we're talking -- this is a route toward -- this is a step toward that goal.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Does that answer your question or do you want to keep going? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** I'd like to keep going. (Laughter.)

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Go ahead. I'm ready for it. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** But you knew that. And -- okay. And -- but -- fine, let's move on to the declaration, though.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Take your time. Just take your time, because I got all day.

**QUESTION:** I don't. (Laughter.)

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I've got Nationals tickets at seven.

**QUESTION:** Is it your position that the declaration should include -- you've said before that the declaration should include -- all nuclear activities means all nuclear activities. But --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Yes. Programs, facilities, material. Yes.

**QUESTION:** Do you include in that definition those programs, facilities and material that would be needed -- that were needed to design and detonate the device that was tested in October?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Yeah, we need to know on their weapons program what they're doing with that. And you know, for example, they used some fissile material. I mean, they produced some material from Yongbyon to detonate that explosive device in October. So we need to know with great precision what they've got there.

And I would argue we need to know -- you know, there's a device that they've put fissile material in. Now, admittedly, without the fissile material, it's just a device. But still, they've got a design there and we need to know what they've got there.

So the point is we need to -- as we go through this process to achieve the complete and irreversible, to the extent one can make life irreversible, we need to do this step by step. So when we're disabling programs, a disablement doesn't mean it's irreversible. I mean, think about if you took down Yongbyon right down to the grass -- to the ground, planted grass, you would have probably -- that's a five-year disablement because Yongbyon, that current complex, was built up in about five years.

So in going for disablement, we're not taking it down to the dirt, but we are putting it -- putting the Yongbyon complex in a position where, if they wanted to restart it, it's not a matter of weeks, it would be a matter of years to get it going. And that would be in the context of pretty heavy duty international crisis for several years to get it going. That's the disablement phase. It doesn't mean that's the end phase. The end phase, as you correctly point out, is complete dismantlement.

**QUESTION:** But isn't it the case that there are at least four facilities on Yongbyon which these inspection teams have not been permitted to see, including, for example, the waste storage site which the IAEA demanded to see in 1992 in which --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I think we saw that. We saw that. I mean, the --

**QUESTION:** It wasn't among the ones you just listed.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL:** Well, the IAEA, I know, has been in the waste storage site. I believe, I -- you know, I may have to take your question. But we're looking at -- I mean, for us what is very important to know at the current stage, what this current team is doing is you look at where the fuel comes from -- the so-called fuel fab -- fabrication plant. Then you look at where the fuel goes, which is the five-megawatt reactor. Then you look at where the spent fuel goes -- that is, the reprocessing facility -- and how they turn the spent fuel into the things that then go into weapons. So we're looking at that part of the production cycle.

Now, my understanding - and again, I've been dealing on the telephone with Sung Kim calling from the lobby in the Koryo Hotel. You know, I'm not sure if they've been able -- if they had problems seeing anything. But my understanding is that everything these technicians needed to see -- these nuclear experts, I should say, needed to see, they were able to see.

Now, what did they want to see? They wanted to see these things so that our menu of items for -- of how we would disable these things -- that is, put them in a position where you can't bring them back for more than a few weeks -- we needed to see whether that would work. So my understanding is they were able to see what they needed to see to make that -- to work that out.

**QUESTION:** I will simply say and let others go onto questioning that my sources told me there were four facilities that would have been relevant to this cycle that were not seen.

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL:** Yeah. I am not aware of any facility that our people wanted to see in Yongbyon -- now, you know, I'm the first to say this is not the universe of facilities. For example, you mention the nuclear test. It was at another place called P'unggye. We haven't seen the nuclear test site, and that's by definition a nuclear test site, but what they -- and you could disable that by filling it with dirt, you know, you could something like that there. But what this team did in the time they had to do it was to go to Yongbyon and look at those very key facilities that, if disabled, means that we will not have more plutonium on this earth.

Am I doing -- all right, let me go for the guy in the way back who's smiling and waving both hands.

**QUESTION:** My name is Don Kirk. I'm based in Seoul as a journalist there. But --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, I don't do questions from Seoul. You'll have to -- (laughter).

**QUESTION:** I missed something earlier about the peace treaty and where that played into it. Somebody asked a question, you mentioned it, and I wasn't quite sure whether -- is this -- can this get involved in these negotiations?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** Can these negotiations be held up by a demand or talk of a peace treaty or a peace regime? Can this become a factor in the declaration, you know, of -- that you're talking about?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, if --

**QUESTION:** I missed what you said.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, you know, if you start with the September '05 agreement, and actually it's mentioned in the February 1st sort of implementation agreement, is that we want to get through the -- first of all, shutting down the reactor, which we've done. Secondly, getting a full list of all their nuclear programs and disabling their nuclear programs. And then -- and when is that? We hope beginning of '08 we would begin to do some other things. One is to begin a peace treaty negotiations among directly related parties, which has not been formally defined and probably there'll be some discussions about who would be directly related to a peace treaty process; obviously, the two Koreas. You know, I think the U.S. would be directly related, probably China, but this has not been formally determined. And then we also have a plan for a sort of a longer-term process known as the Northeast Asia peace and security mechanism.

Now, the idea of starting these things, and they might start at the end of this year depending on how we do on disablement, we want to keep our eye on the ball, which is complete denuclearization. But because negotiating a peace treaty is something that would take a long time, or peace mechanism, it would take months and months, we might want to start that at the end of this year with the idea that we could finish in the fall of '08. So it would be started at a time when we don't have complete denuclearization; we would only have disablement of the Yongbyon facility. But we would not reach a final agreement and have a signature ceremony until -- a signing ceremony until the day we have a complete denuclearization. So I hope that answers your question.

Yeah, Elise.

**QUESTION:** Two quick ones. First of all, on the Syria-North Korea issue, have you brought this up with the North Koreans? Are you planning on, when you meet your North Korean counterparts --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Elise, I mean, I've seen, you know, I've seen the press reports. I'm not really in a position to comment except to tell you that proliferation is an issue that we bring up, we have brought up and we will continue to bring up, with the understanding that we have to have clarity on that fact, on proliferation issues, as we do on issues of things like what's going on in Yongbyon.

**QUESTION:** But you can't say specifically whether you're going to talk --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I really can't get into any specific, you know, press reports of that kind or places of that kind. But just to tell you that, you know, I'm sure -- I can assure you that the issue of proliferation is and has been, since the beginning of the six-party process, very much on our minds. Because again, what is the problem with nuclear weapons in North Korea? One, it's a problem of regional stability; two, it's a problem that these weapons and programs could find themselves elsewhere. So this has always been a big concern of ours and will continue to be. And as we go through the declaration phase, you know, we need to be pretty clear on what's been going on.

**QUESTION:** Just one more quick on the HEU program. Where are you with the North Koreans in terms of any kind of understanding that that's going to have to be in the declaration?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Am I correct that they still have not admitted to it in any way, shape or form? They've been making hints --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** They've said it has to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction, and that would be resolved in the declaration phase. And you know, without going into any real details on our discussions about it, we have had -- regarding our concerns, we've had some good discussions and we'll continue to have those good discussions. And I think -- I mean, you know, I hate to predict where we'll be in December, but I think we can fulfill the idea that we will be -- we will have a resolution of this.

**QUESTION:** Just a quick follow-up to Elise's question. What will change --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** She already followed up her own question. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** What will the United States be using as a basis to reply to North Korea if North Korea says they have got no uranium enrichment program?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Oh, that gets into the tools of the trade. I mean, believe me, I've got plenty to work on there.

Back there. Yeah, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** When and on what condition can we expect North Korea to be taken off the terrorism sponsorship country?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** I mean the -- regarding the terrorism sponsorship --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Oh, yes. Okay.

**QUESTION:** When and on what condition can we expect North Korea to be taken off?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, this is a goal that the North Koreans are very interested in. For them to be on the list of state sponsors of terrorism is something they want to get off of, and we've had a lot of discussions on this. We've identified a way forward on that, on how that could happen. But I'm just going to tell you it hasn't happened yet.

Mike.

**QUESTION:** Just two things. One a point of clarification, the other one a question. You said that the experts up in Pyongyang had worked out precisely how they're going to go about disabling and that they've discussed this with the North Koreans.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** They have discussed -- I should -- they had discussed some very precise ideas for how to do it, yeah.

**QUESTION:** I was just wondering if they're reached a conditional agreement with the North Koreans or if that still needs to be negotiated in Beijing.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** No, it's -- I wouldn't call anything they did -- these are among experts, so I wouldn't say there's an agreement. But there was a very -- I mean, very detailed discussion about what needs to be done. And so what they will do is report to the six parties and we'll have a discussion in the six parties. And I believe based on the very hard work of all of the experts, you know, from these three nuclear weapons states but also the experts from DPRK, that I think we can -- we have a pretty good shot at getting something in the next six-party meeting.

But you know -- go ahead.

**QUESTION:** And just secondly on the North Korea-Syria link, there seems to be a consensus and if these allegations are true, it is very serious. But there's also a heated debate amongst the experts about the accuracy and value of the intelligence itself. I'm just wondering if you're concerned at all that information is being selectively released by longtime opponents of negotiations with North Korea to delay or scuttle progress on the six-party talks.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Look, again, I can't discuss intelligence matters, but I can just assure you that proliferation has been a major issue for us. (Laughter.) And even though Helene may find that very funny, it is a very serious matter. And we -- are you chastised enough there? It's a very serious matter. And you know, we have pursued it and we will continue to pursue it because ultimately what we need in all this is some real transparency.

Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador, can you talk more about your meeting with Minister Chen Yunlin of China earlier today? Did the Chinese threaten to do anything against Taiwan President's pushing for referendum?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** You know, we didn't discuss threats. But I tell you what, most people here I think want to talk about Yongbyon, except for Helene. But yeah -- but let me talk to you -- I can maybe talk to you a little bit later about that. Thank you.

Wait. Who hasn't asked a question? All right, Chris, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Obviously, we know that there's no flexibility on disclosing, you know, about enrichment materials and all they're doing. But is there flexibility in --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry. Is there flexibility in how disclosures are made if you're satisfied with them as they come along, or does it have to be sort of all at once for them to account for their uranium enrichment --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, you know, look, things don't happen all at once. You kind of work over things and then you've got to -- you know, we're not -- these are discussions where you're talking about things that then need to be, you know, verified and these are -- you know, they're very detailed discussions. Nothing -- nothing just pops out of the sky. I just think that we're talking about issues and I believe that the commitment to resolve this to mutual satisfaction is realizable.

Yes.

**QUESTION:** Can you address what would be the next steps in terms of assistance to North Korea?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Assistance, yeah.

**QUESTION:** Financial assistance, energy assistance, so forth from the U.S. specifically, but anyone -- any other that you would like to address?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** And the second question is, is -- does it seem that this process of -- has -- is picking up in terms of getting towards a resolution in the last month, month and a half, two months?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Which -- I mean --

**QUESTION:** Does it seem like you're moving faster right now towards a resolution, towards --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Of the overall nuclear issue?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Oh, well, we've got a long way to go. I mean --

**QUESTION:** Why are they --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** You know, for those of you in need of instant gratification, go elsewhere. (Laughter.) No, it's going to take us a while, but -- you know, I think we've gotten a few things done. I think we're about to get a few other things done and we're taking it step by step. But we're not going to be satisfied till we get to the end of this. I want to be very clear. We absolutely must achieve complete denuclearization.

Yes, sir.

**QUESTION:** What about ambassador --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Oh, the assistance? So we will -- there is a commitment among -- part of the -- well, the February agreement on disablement and declaration involved the provision of 950,000 tons of fuel oil. Four of the five countries in the six-party process agreed to do that. Japan will come in when their concerns about -- some of their bilateral concerns are properly addressed. So in terms of the four countries currently in that process, the U.S. is gearing up to fulfill our part of the fuel supply, so we are working on providing our shipments which will come at some point in the fall.

And we've also -- unrelated to the six-party process, we've been looking at DPRK pretty closely in the light of the -- or in the wake of the floods and to see what we can do in terms of food supply, because it's our judgment that these floods have affected their -- the amount of the -- well, the harvest. So we're prepared to work with the DPRK, you know, on substantial food assistance and the monitoring requirements through NGOs.

**QUESTION:** Is the U.S. fuel supply contingent on any particular step?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, the fuel supply is part of the -- our provision of fuel is part of their provision of disablement and declaration. So they wanted the fuel supply to be a sort of regular supply, but on the other hand, we didn't want a situation where we're supplying fuel and they're not doing anything, so we kind of worked out some benchmarks and we think that they are moving on their obligations and so we can move on our obligations.

You know, it's -- it's -- you're syncing two different things together. You're syncing a -- C, Y, syncing a -- you know, a fuel supply with a denuclearization process. So I think we're pretty balanced on that. I don't think anyone's out there. I don't think they've done more, I don't think the North Koreans have done more on denuclearization than we've done on fuel, but I don't think we've done more on fuel than denuclearization.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador Hill, to what degree do the North Koreans have to give a list of their engineers, technicians, and equipment suppliers? And you may have heard this week that the Russians have come up with a new vacuum bomb. Have the North Koreans been forthcoming? Do you think that they are sincere in their efforts to just totally close down all those particular nuclear weapons?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Yeah. Well, I mean, again, we're -- you know, we're going to -- I'm not aware of it. The DPRK is working on the -- what is it, the vacuum bomb? (Laughter.)

But I think we have -- you know, with respect to the issue of -- you know, what their programs are, I mean, we have to have our technical people talk to their technical people and -- you know, there's certain questions that are -- whose answers we really need and then there are other questions whose answers we'd like to have. But you know, obviously, there's a sort of triage and so we'll try to get clarity on all these programs.

Yeah, I'll give one more question because -- all right, this is --

**QUESTION:** Thank you. I just wanted to ask about the ministerial. At what point do you think you'd be ready to gather the --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, you know, frankly, I think we're ready pretty soon. And I would think, you know, if we're okay in the next six-party plenary and, you know, I should never get too optimistic in this business, but you know, I think we're going to get through the plenary and get what we need. Then I think we'd be ready to go with a ministerial, but then it's a question of, you know, getting six ministers in the same place at the same time.

**QUESTION:** What would be the objective of that gathering?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, I think they would want to -- this would be a real sign that we've kind of achieved a little momentum in this process. They would review what we've been doing, and then they'd look ahead, sort of sneak preview of the next phase, and I think the ministers will want to look very carefully at things like the Northeast Asian peace and security mechanism idea that we have. And I think they would like to look ahead to what we envision as the final stage of denuclearization, which is abandonment of fissile material, the weapons, pursuant to the opening paragraph of the September '05 statement. I mean, at the end of the day, what we're interested in is nuclear weapons programs. I mean, that's what this is all about. And you know, to disable the Yongbyon facilities is an absolutely essential step in this process. To get clarity to mutual satisfaction on the subject of uranium enrichment is another essential step, but these steps won't -- are not in and of themselves enough. We need to get to the last step. We're not going to step out of this.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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