



Press Conference on U.S.-China Security Dialogue

John R. Bolton, Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security
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DONALD BISHOP: Ladies and gentlemen we are pleased to see you today. We have with us the Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, John R. Bolton. He's here in Beijing for the second session of the US/China security dialogue. He has a few comments first.

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here. This is the second opportunity that we've had to engage in the security dialogue on strategic issues that President Bush and Zhang Zemin agreed to at their meeting in Crawford. We covered a wide range of issues involving non-proliferation and arms control. We discussed Iran, North Korea, the proliferation security initiative, and a variety of other questions. Maybe the easiest thing would be if I just stopped there and tried to respond to your questions.



No questions, right? Okay.

QUESTION: Did you discuss with Zhang Yesui the possibility of Russian participation in North Korean future talks and towards American position. Does America agree that Russia could also participate. Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Yes we did discuss that and it's been our view that Russia should participate in multilateral discussions about the North Korean nuclear weapons program. In fact, we think that ultimately it would be useful for all five of the legitimate nuclear weapons states to participate.

QUESTION: UPI. Could you tell us who you spoke with and how long you're going to be in Beijing?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, today I met with Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui who is relatively new in his position. He succeeded Wang Guangya. This was our first opportunity to meet and he had a number of his colleagues with him. Then I met at 4 o'clock Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi where we principally discussed North Korea. Tomorrow I'll see the Foreign Minister and then I'm off for South Korea.

QUESTION: Jim Randall with VOA. Do you get any sense that the two sides are moving any closer to making some kind of agreement on when talks might resume? When and where? And what format? Is there any visible progress to report?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I don't really think there is anything to report one way or other. I think you're familiar with the meetings that took place in Washington about 10 days ago and we'll see what develops from that.

QUESTION: My name is Johnny Allink for the German newspaper Die Welt. Because there was a lot of information in Beijing that August is the time for the next meeting. Can you confirm that or do you think that's possible to meet in August for the second round of consultations. Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I don't think there's anything on a date one way or the other that I could really indicate. In fact Vice Foreign Minister Wang Yi was saying that there's a lot that's reported in the press that's not accurate.

QUESTION: Knight-Ridder Newspapers. Among the things that have been reported recently is that the US is prepared to give North Korea some sort of security guarantee and that the US may agree to another round of three party talks if they're immediately followed by five party talks. Are those reports accurate or are they not accurate?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well I think the United States position has been stated by the President and it's been the case for quite some time that we have no intention of an invasion of North Korea and are prepared to say that, as Secretary Powell had said, in a piece of paper. I don't really think that's the issue. It's certainly not the issue that people should be focused on. What people should be focused on is North Korea's nuclear weapons program.

QUESTION: (inaudible) Russian News Agency. There were reports regarding the formats of the future meetings. There were reports that it would be arranged in two phases. The first phase would be three participants, as it was in April. And, immediately after this phase it would be the six participants of the meeting. Can you confirm it?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, as I said before, there are a lot of reports about a lot of things some of which have only slight relationship to reality. The issue is not ultimately what the shape of the talks is. The issue is how we're going to get on a multilateral basis North Korea's nuclear program dismantled in a complete, verifiable and irreversible way. We're prepared, and we've said we're prepared, in a variety of multilateral formats that begin discussions as to how we're going to accomplish that objective. I think that, for us, is the focus and has been from the outset.

QUESTION: Ting An from China Daily. I know that North Korea just sued eleven presidents including Bush and Bush's father and we wonder what's the attitude from the American government and does that have any effect on the coming trilateral talks?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well I don't think they're necessarily are coming trilateral talks. And, as for they're bringing a lawsuit against everybody they could think of, it's very charming and so on, but not particularly helpful I don't think.

QUESTION: New York Times. Can you tell us a little about what you've learned, if anything, recently about North Korea's attitude toward the talks? I mean, expressly, any kind of commitment to the dialogue or is any more optimistic... (inaudible) serious about grappling with the issues that you mentioned... (inaudible)...

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Am I any more optimistic? No. I'm not any more pessimistic either. I don't know that I've learned anything that affects my optimism scale one way or the other.

QUESTION: Could you talk a little about what the (inaudible)... the Chinese about nuclear proliferation involving arm sales, sales of arms to Iran and whether you asked the Chinese for more safeguards or measures to insure that it doesn't happen anymore?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: You mean Chinese sales to Iran? [Yes, Chinese] Well, we discussed a variety of recent sanctions decisions that the United States government made and the reasons why, under our statutes and executive orders, we make sanctions decisions against entities that engage in such sales. We expressed our desire that this kind of outward proliferation behavior should cease because of the destabilizing effect it has in the region and the contribution that it makes to Iran's ongoing ballistic missile program. Which, when you couple with their ongoing clandestine nuclear weapons program, is a cause of great concern to the United States and many other countries.

QUESTION: (inaudible).. regarding relations between China and Iran. Whether you delivered your concerns about relations between China and Iran, and oil and gas or fuels?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: We didn't discuss that question.

QUESTION: Thank you I work for Kyodo News. Mr. Bolton I'm just wondering is there any line in the sand that the US... how far and how long is the US government prepared to keep talking about this issue with North Korea? Is there any line in the sand where the United States might envision using military force against North Korea? And, just considering that Iraq and the issue of North Korea have both been involved to some extent with weapons of mass destruction, how come the approach to North Korea in focusing on talks has been so different to the approach on Iraq? Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: To answer your second question first, because North Korea is not Iraq. The context is very different. The circumstances are very different. And, the history has been very different. I think President Bush has made it clear for quite some time that what we seek here, in the case of North Korea, is the peaceful dismantlement of North Korea's nuclear weapons program. That has been his charge to us from the outset and it remains our objective and it's what we've discussed here today.

QUESTION: I'm with NHK, Japan. When you bring up the issue of proliferation security initiative, what is the Chinese reaction? Are they positive about that or not? And my second question is, do you think the attendance of Russia in the meeting about North Korean issue, would it accelerate the momentum of the meeting or not?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, our discussions about the proliferation security initiative were in the nature of my briefing the Chinese about where the international negotiations on the initiatives stood. And, as I said to them, it's a little bit like a chicken and an egg problem since our discussions with the other ten countries that have joined with us in this initiative are not finished. So, I didn't have final conclusions to report, here in Beijing today. But, at the same time, I wanted to be able to give them the thinking of the eleven partners in the PSI, who announced at their first meeting in Madrid that they were prepared to conduct interdictions of international shipments of weapons of mass destruction and delivery systems. And, who at their second meeting at Brisbane moved a long way toward making that political resolve operational by agreeing, for example, to conduct interdiction exercises for the next several months; by identifying the particular concerns that the eleven countries had of rogue states and terrorist groups that were seeking the weapons of mass destruction and naming Iran and North Korea, in particular; and, by explaining some of the obligations and responsibilities that the eleven countries participating in it the initiative felt that they had as flag states or coastal states or trans-shipment states; dealing with maritime authorities, but relating as well to the possibility of interdictions in the air and over land. So, really what we wanted to do was convey some better sense to the Chinese as to the progress that the eleven nations participating in the PSI had been making toward identifying what they were prepared to interdict, against whom they were prepared to interdict it, and to delineate some of the circumstances in which some of the interdictions would take place. The Chinese side had a number of questions. That is basically the way we left it.

QUESTION: Al Jazeera. Did you have the opportunity to ask the Chinese for a possibility of sending logistic troops to Iraq? And, my second question, due to some information that a visit by the Iranian foreign minister, Mr. Kharazzi, was going to be today but was cancelled, do you think there is any linkage between your visit now here and the cancellation of Mr. Kharazzi's visit to China?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: I don't know how Mr. Kharrazi sets his travel schedules so I don't know whether there is any connection between the two visits or not. We did discuss Iraq, and our reconstruction and stabilization efforts, but we did not discuss the question of possible Chinese troop participation.

QUESTION: Thank you, Lisa Weaver, CNN. Two questions. One, did the Chinese say anything about possibly participating in a UN Security Council statement that would urge Pyongyang to rejoin the nonproliferation treaty? And, two, did the Chinese respond to the Norinco Corporation? That was the corporation that the State Department a few months ago put on the list allegedly selling missiles, or missile parts to Iraq; did that come up?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Not allegedly, they were selling missile components.

QUESTION: Did the Chinese respond to that allegation and did they make any commitment?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, on the second question, they had previously said they didn't think that the transaction in question had taken place. We're quite convinced that the basis for the sanctions was correct. We did discuss this question of the sanctions as I mentioned a moment ago. And in terms of the discussion of possible action in the Security Council, we certainly did discuss that. Its been our view for some time that its appropriate to have the question of the North Korean nuclear weapons programs discussed in the Security Council, as the Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency overwhelmingly concluded, when they referred the matter to the Security Council, that it did amount to a threat to international peace and security. Now, the question of how action in the Council might be affected by other diplomatic efforts is something that we have had extensive discussions with China and other countries about, and we see it as two alternative tracks; that we would like to make progress towards eliminating the North Korean weapons program, and the Security Council certainly strikes us as one place where appropriate multilateral discussions could take place. There may be other tracks as well, we'll have to see.

QUESTION: Mr. Bolton, is the U.S. Government committed to a peaceful dialogue in addressing the North Korean nuclear issue?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: The United States is committed to the peaceful elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, and we have engaged in multilateral discussions with North Korea. We're prepared for multilateral discussions, but let's be clear: they will be multilateral, because the North Korean nuclear weapons program is a threat, not just to the United States, but to the countries of Northeast Asia, and indeed, because of North Korea's proliferation record, to the world as a whole.

QUESTION: How close are the North Koreans to having a bomb, and how many bombs are we talking about?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I don't really have anything new to say on what Secretary Rumsfeld and other people have said before.

QUESTION: Washington Post. Can you tell us what your assessment is of how helpful the Chinese have been on these issues, particularly North Korea? And, what else could they do to be more helpful?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I think the Chinese government has devoted a lot of attention and effort toward the question of getting multilateral negotiations underway. We've considered those efforts very important, and I'm not sure that there is anything else specifically that we could think of that the government here could do that they haven't already tried. That's not the question; the question is whether and when North Korea is going to take the steps necessary to dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

QUESTION: China is doing what it can, and that's a lot, according to what you have just told us. But what else; what other levers do you have? China is North Korea's most important ally. If this most important ally is doing what arm-twisting they can, what's Plan B? What else can you do?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, as I said, I think there are several tracks that we are pursuing. One, the possibility of resumed multilateral negotiations under Chinese auspices. Second, proceeding in the Security Council, as the Security Council is authorized to do, in a good multilateral fashion to deal with this threat to international peace and security. And third, through other steps that we've taken such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, to deny North Korea the hard currency earnings that it uses to fund the nuclear weapons program to begin with. So, we're certainly pursuing a variety of diplomatic options, but we're pursuing other options as well.

QUESTION: Thank you, CNN again. Did you get any sense from the Chinese, I realize this isn't an easy one to answer, but do they seem to have any intelligence on North Korea's nuclear capability that other countries may not have? I realize you can't spell it out, but can you characterize the value of what they may know? Thank you.

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: That's okay, they didn't spell it out to us either. Well, I think there's no disagreement among the countries most concerned by the North Korean program that they're pursuing nuclear weapons, both through the route of reprocessing spent fuel to extract plutonium, and through the uranium-enrichment route. That really is not the issue. The issue is how one would believe reliably a North Korean commitment to eliminate that program in an irreversible fashion. We've discussed a variety of aspects of that, including the question of verification, which we think would be central to any conclusion that resulted in the North Korean program being eliminated. I think there may well be aspects that China could be helpful on there at an appropriate point.

QUESTION: Following up on the Security Council (inaudible). Previously the Chinese have said that this would not be a helpful avenue to resolve this issue. Have they changed that position at all in this process?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I think our position has been that the five Permanent Members of the Council, who are also the five legitimate nuclear weapons states, have to look at the Council as an alternative, as an option for proceeding, or otherwise face the marginalization of the Security Council on this critical issue. If there are other ways in which the multilateral negotiations could proceed, we're certainly open to that. We've demonstrated that by the range of proposals that we've said are acceptable to us as forums where these multilateral negotiations can proceed: 2+3, 2+4, Permanent Five+5, Permanent Five+4, so on, and so forth, including the trilateral negotiations, such as were hosted by China. So, there's no doubt we have been flexible in looking for alternatives. But ultimately if the Security Council is to remain a venue where these kinds of issues can be addressed, not being able to address the North Korean issue would be a grave impairment of the Council, and would mean that it was not only incapable of addressing North Korea, but might well be impaired from addressing other proliferation issues, or other threats to international peace and security as well. So, those who say the Security Council is not the appropriate place to go have to take into account the impact of their statements on the long-term significance and potential role of the Council in a variety of disputes.

QUESTION: How do you talk with China today about Japan's role in next multilateral talks on DPRK's nuclear issue?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, we've said we favor the inclusion of both South Korea and Japan and Russia, and others, as I've said. We've said several times before, that there aren't going to be substantive discussions until South Korea and Japan are included. They have a vital stake in the resolution of the North Korean nuclear weapons program, and the idea that substantive discussion and substantive progress on the issue could be made without them being present to speak on behalf of their own equities, I think, is just a non-starter.

QUESTION: Could you answer to my previous question? What would be the role of Russian attendance at the meeting to solve the nuclear issue?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well I think Russia's attendance is warranted because it is a major power in the region, and is therefore directly affected by the actions North Korea takes. Russia has a historic relationship with North Korea that could make it a very important factor in convincing North Korea that it has to abandon its nuclear weapons program. And, as both a Permanent Member of the Security Council, and one of the five legitimate nuclear weapons states, I think that's also a substantial argument for Russia's participation. I don't see that there's any disagreement between us and Russia over that possibility. I think this is something that is going to happen inevitably, if there is to be a diplomatic solution. I don't see that we're making progress by denying entry into the negotiations by countries that have a legitimate and substantial stake in the outcome.

QUESTION: You mentioned that President Bush is committed to a peaceful resolution, and yet if you go back to October, when this thing started to unravel, it seems that there has been absolutely no progress on the diplomatic front. President Bush and others have also mentioned that all options are open and are on the table, which implies that at some point a military solution might be attempted. Do you consider the military option viable, given the potential consequences, I mean retaliation by North Korea?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: I'll stick with the President on that one.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) I was wondering if you could tell us what your understanding is of the extent that Pakistani missile and nuclear proliferation with respect to North Korea, and where things stand at the moment please?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, the Pakistanis have assured us that they are not cooperating with North Korea on either ballistic missile or nuclear weapons programs. They've given that assurance directly to Secretary Powell, and we take them at their word.

QUESTION: If China is doing everything that it can do, and it has already done what you think it could do, how much more influence does it have? Are you starting to question how much influence Beijing actually has over North Korea?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: I'm sorry, in saying that, I was addressing the question of what else they could do diplomatically to bring the North Koreans into a multilateral negotiation. I don't think there's any question that China's influence beyond that is substantial, given that it supplies between 70% and 90% of North Korea's fuel needs, and provides substantial additional humanitarian assistance as well. That's a point we've made in our discussions with China many times.

QUESTION: I just wanted to follow up on the question about China's attitude towards talking about the issue in the Security Council. Has their position changed on that, and what did they have to say about that today?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I think their view is that there's a prospect for further discussions following on to the April conversations. It's not that we're pressing one alternative as opposed to the other. What we are saying is that the Security Council is now seized with this matter. It's been referred by the IAEA. And, that if there's progress on one or another diplomatic front, there's no particular need or urgency for the Council to act now. But the Council's ability and willingness to address this question at an appropriate time is an important test for the Security Council. If it's not able to pass that test, it will obviously have an impact, not only on the North Korean situation, but on the Council's future role in other crises as well.

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Okay, why don't we take this gentleman, and then I'll take the gentleman from Al Jazeera again.

QUESTION: After Beijing you are going to travel to South Korea and Japan so what can we expect from your trip?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: I'm not going to North Korea.

QUESTION: That's right, so what can we expect from your trip?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, I have tried to visit the region on a regular basis. I was last here in January. We have ongoing consultations on a variety of issues

that just make it sensible to stop here, and then in Seoul and Tokyo, on visits like this. So I'll be discussing the range of proliferation and arms control questions in those capitals as well.

QUESTION: When you say multilateral talks, do you have an exact number of parties that should be involved in these talks, less than which you cannot agree, and can you name them please?

UNDER SECRETARY BOLTON: Well, we've been very flexible in the range of multilateral options that we've been willing to consider and employ. We've gone as low as three, as we did in April, below which you cannot go any more and still be multilateral. And we've gone as high as ten in the Permanent Five+5 proposal. There may be other formulations as well. This is not, I want to stress, a process point. This is a point that goes to the central threat posed by the North Korean weapons program, and the reason why, in addressing it and hopefully eliminating it, its important to have broad participation. North Korea benefited in the 1993-1994 Agreed Framework by making it seem as if this were an issue with the United States alone, where it manifestly is not. The threat posed by the North Korean program extends to all the countries that are present in this region, and globally as well, and so that, since this is really a fully international problem, is why we believe that, from the outset, it has to be addressed in an appropriate multilateral forum.

I appreciate it, thank you very much.

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