



Press Roundtable

Richard L. Armitage, Deputy Secretary of State

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DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I'm just delighted to be back here. Among all the things that I've done in Japan over the years, I think tonight I'm going to have the most pleasure. I'm going to be presenting an award from the United States to Shiina-sensei, and I can't tell you how much pleasure it gives me, because he's taught me an awful lot about how to act with principle and how to stand up for what you believe in. I think there's going to be press pool film available if anybody's interested. We're going to have quite a ceremony at the Ambassador's residence tonight, and I must tell you, on a personal basis, I couldn't be happier to do this. I don't have any opening statement. We'll just go around the table, and I'll try to respond to questions you may have, and we'll let it go.

QUESTION: My name is Sakamoto, correspondent of Yomiuri Shimbun. I'd like to ask about U.S. policy toward North Korea. I think that last week, Mr. Koizumi and Mr. Roh met, and they made a statement, and they said that they reconfirmed principles stated in the summit meetings with President Bush, with both heads of governments. So, first of all, could you tell me what kinds of measures do you think might be taken if North Korea escalates the situation further?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I think you're asking probably the same questions you asked Mike Green at lunch today, and it's silly to ask hypothetical questions, I think, because I don't know what the action is, so I don't know what the reaction will be. I think the important thing is that the United States, Japan, Republic of Korea, China, and I might add Russia, stay very closely aligned on this matter, and make sure that we coordinate our response. It's quite clear that no one wants the situation to escalate among those five I just named, and we have to do our best to keep the situation from escalating. That's why the reaffirmation by the two, Prime Minister Koizumi and President Roh here in Tokyo, of the principles that they discussed with President Bush, both at Crawford and in Washington, is a very important factor. As you would know from discussions with other officials, we put a lot of emphasis on multilateral diplomacy, and the reason is we found that bilaterally the North Koreans play us off. It's much better to let the North Koreans be seen, by all the major countries who are concerned, for just what they are. But I'm not going to get into any specifics of what we'll do if they escalate. We'll discuss it at the time.

QUESTION: (Several questions overlap.)

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Let's go around this way. It's easier - no fighting that way! (laughter)

QUESTION: Satoru Suzuki of TV Asahi. Also about North Korea, they cancelled their visit that was planned for today, because of what they called a massive security clampdown by Japanese authorities. Mr. Secretary, do you support what the Japanese government has been doing with regards to that ship's (Man Gyong Bong's) visit, what they plan to do in order to stop the possible smuggling of missile parts and other things?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I absolutely support the activities of the government of Japan, and I would note, I'd find it very difficult to understand how any Japanese citizen couldn't support the activities, particularly after you've all seen the mystery ship, and you could go down and look at it today! Absolutely, I support it.

QUESTION: Keisuke Yamada, Jiji Press. I'll stick to the question of North Korea.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Imagine my surprise. (laughter)

QUESTION: There remains still ambiguity about the agreement of the three countries. Actually, Koizumi and Bush agree totally that tougher measures are needed ... Roh seems to be unwilling to actively endorse that. Do you have a word or two on that?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I know from my own discussions with President Roh, and I've read discussions here in Tokyo, that it seems to me that all three - South Korea, the United States and Japan - agree on the need for pressure and dialogue. Perhaps the difference with President Roh has to do with emphasis. Clearly, he is the one with the biggest equity exposed immediately, therefore, he might put more emphasis on dialogue. But clearly, what we've all done in the past has not worked with North Korea, notwithstanding how much assistance South Korea has provided or the United States or Japan, or money, or international agreements - the North Koreans have violated them. Clearly, we have to change what we are doing, so in our view we need some pressure to go along with the dialogue. But I don't sense a major difference of opinion. I think it's a difference of emphasis, and probably the difference of emphasis comes from the different geographic locations of our three countries.

QUESTION: (Imazato, Tokyo Shimbun) Yes, let me change the subject. You are the person who the Japanese government calls the "boots on the ground" this time. And my question is, what kind of support do you wish Japan would give the Iraqi people or the U.S. this time?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: You're asking was I the one who used the "boots on the ground?"

QUESTION: Yes, that's one of the questions. My other question is actually whether you are requesting the government to show the Japanese army to (inaudible).

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: On the question of whatever I said or didn't say privately to a Japanese diplomat, I'll just keep it private. On the question of what we expect from Japan, I'll tell you I'm absolutely delighted with what I've read in the newspapers about the willingness to move forward, among the coalition members of the government, with an Iraqi-related piece of legislation. So, first of all, whatever assistance the government of Japan renders, I think, is most appropriate. But let me be clear what is important to me as a person. I've desired and worked for years to try to bring about a situation in which the United States and Japan take part in the great endeavors of our time, and I used an analogy which some people accuse me of being silly about, but the analogy was, it's about time for Japan to quit paying to see the baseball game and get down on the baseball diamond and play the game. It's not necessary to be a pitcher or a catcher, where you have to be involved in every play. You can play first base or right field or shortstop or whatever is comfortable to you. But one thing's for sure, unless you're on the baseball diamond, you can't play, you just pay to watch. In that regard, Japan, if successful in the Diet deliberations coming forward with any assistance and/or "boots on the ground," would be a most welcome development, and it would leave me with a great feeling of confidence that Japan is willing to take her place with the major nations of the world and play a positive role for security.

QUESTION: (Fuse, NTV) My question is to follow up what Mr. Suzuki asked about the Man Gyong Bong, the North Korean ship that decided not to

come. The Japanese government authorities did not hide their intention to be tough when the ship comes. For example, the Japanese authorities wanted to do a thorough inspection after the ship reached a Japanese port, and consequently they decided not to come. But do you think that was a good result of a good policy? Would it have been better to let the ship come and do the information gathering or intelligence gathering and make it useful?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: You're asking questions the answers to which one can't know. The policy of the government of Japan, and in this case on this ferry, was developed only by the government of Japan. I was asked if I support it, and I said absolutely. I think if you look at what's going on recently, our friends in Australia found a boat which was smuggling not only arms but drugs, and more recently the South Koreans found I think it was 50 kilos of meth amphetamines on a ship that was coming out of a North Korean port. You had your own experience with the mystery ship, which I referred to earlier. You've had your own terrible tragedy of the abductees. So I think there are any number of reasons for Japanese authorities to be very suspicious and to be very cautious.

QUESTION: I would like to focus on the unilateralness of the Bush administration. Since the war ended, I've watched the unilateralism of the Bush administration. Many people criticize it right now. For example, today's article in the New York Times, some analysts of Iraq traitors reject germ arms, and American/British intelligence analysts with direct access to the evidence are disputing claims of the mysterious traitor found in Iraq for making deadly germs, so this is my....

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Are you talking about the vans...DIA analysts?

QUESTION: Yes. Dr. Rice tried to explain that the U.S. and British armies are going to find evidence of weapons of mass destruction sooner or later, but so far I'm not convinced hearing what Dr. Rice has said. On the contrary, your friend, Joseph Nye, the Dean of the JFK School of Harvard, emphasized that the U.S. needs to use soft power, especially in diplomacy. Can you evaluate the situation of the Bush Administration, whether or not the Bush Administration is taking the unilateral way or not? If you can explain well, maybe I'll be convinced.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you. That's an incredibly difficult, complicated question. I'll take it in three parts: first, is on the question of unilateralism. I'm often asked this, and I would ask you, what is the issue? What issue are you referring to?

QUESTION: For example, the process of the Iraq war.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: No, that was not unilateral. We had 40 some countries, 29 of them actively participated, 4 of whom actually put boots on the ground. That's not unilateral. The same is true of Afghanistan - we had an even larger coalition. By the way, the only place we're criticized now is for not being unilateral in Korea. People criticize us for not being unilateral. We want to go multilateral on the question of Korea and we get criticized. I think that the comments about unilateralism come out of two things, the Kyoto Treaty and the ICC, which to be fair, candidate Bush was quite clear about, as a candidate, that he would not accede. Period. So maybe people are very surprised that a politician actually does what he said he would do during a political campaign. So, on the question of unilateralism, I hear it a lot, but I see it a little. It was the United States who, in September, President Bush, to try to revive the UN Security Council, subsequently got a 15-0 vote. We went back to the Security Council, although we did not need to. We were unsuccessful. More recently, governing the activities of the international community in Iraq, we received a 14-0 vote, 1 absentia by Syria, on the question. So that's multilateral activities, it seems to me.

Now on the question of where we find, and whether I can convince you. Sir, I'm not sure I can convince you, but I'll tell you several things. Before the war, did Saddam Hussein exist? Yes. He did. And we haven't found him, but we know he existed. Before the war, did weapons of mass destruction exist? Well, of course. He used them. He used them against Iran, he used them on his own people. We haven't found them yet, so keep that in mind. We'll find it. On the question of the vans, the bio-vans which I think the DIA folks may have been referring to or maybe it was something else, Secretary Powell was very interesting when he was asked this yesterday. He was asked if the vans were really biological and used for biological weapons. He said yes, of course. First of all, they match perfectly the intelligence that we had, and that he presented on 5 February. Second, he said, and I thought quite interestingly, that if these vans were not used for biological weapons, but rather were used for making hydrogen gas or fermenting beer, the Iraqis would have come forward on 6th February and showed that the United States was being silly. But they didn't, because these were biological weapons vans. I would submit to you that, just like the building of coral, that's what our forces in the British and coalition forces are doing now, getting information. The vans were part of it, and over time we're going to build that coral, and some day we'll see that there's a whole structure of BW and CW weapons in Iraq.

QUESTION: Let's change the subject to the U.S. military presence in Asia. It is reported that the Bush Administration has started to study the redeployment of the military presence in Asia, particularly in view of the threat from North Korea. How are you going to redeploy, if so?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Thank you. The redeployment is a worldwide study. In the past, we have more or less adopted a regional approach to things. But we've found, with the global war on terrorism, because of the nature of trans-national activities, that, for instance, forces in Europe may actually be used in the Middle East or Southeast Asia, and vice versa. Asian forces might be used in other theaters. It's the nature of this global war on terrorism. So in truth, it is not an Asian re-look. It's a global re-look, first of all.

Second of all, we may have some relocations or changes. We're having discussions, as you saw in the press, with our Korean friends about relocating some of the forces to areas that are not so far north near the DMZ. We need to get out of the areas that are so crowded. When we first went to Korea there was nothing north of Seoul, and when General Powell served there, when I traveled there first in 1967, it was all country from Seoul to the DMZ. Now it's all city. Our bases are hemmed in, closed in. We can do nothing. So we need to remove those, with the permission and with the willing accomplice of the South Korean government, to areas which are not so crowded, in which they can breathe a little bit. None of that is going to be done without the full agreement of the South Korean government, and none of it's going to be done, anyway, without the full understanding of the government of Japan. But we've just started those discussions. A man well known to you, Mr. Chris LaFleur, is the State Department representative at those discussions, and I think he may even be around Tokyo today or tomorrow, so you can have these conversations. But what he'll tell you is that we're in the beginning of a process, all of which will be totally exposed to our friends in Japan. There's nothing mysterious about it. There's nothing frightening about it. At the end of the day - and I'm talking about a process that takes years; it doesn't take months - we'll be, the United States, in a better posture to fulfill all of our duties under our various security treaties, not the least of which is the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.

QUESTION: I'm Ichinose with NHK. Thank you very much. I have a question on North Korea, and the question is whether we have... whether time is on our side or on their side, because while we are trying to put multi-national pressure on, North Korea is apparently going nuclear. How much time do we still have, and how are you going to stop this? What is your timeframe for your negotiations, or any kind of actions you might consider?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, let's be clear: the Koreans admitted to us that they had nuclear capability. We've been saying publicly that they had at least one or two weapons for about two years now, maybe a little more. So there's nothing particularly surprising in that. We don't have a timeframe in mind. We have begun discussions with friends about having better multilateral mechanisms with which to stop proliferation. We think we've been somewhat successful in lowering the appetite of some countries for technology etc. from North Korea. We do have certain intelligence capabilities, and I might note that when we stopped, last December, that vessel off Yemen carrying the Scud missiles, it was a very good signal to North Korea. The signal was: We can see you, we know what you're doing, and we can reach out any time and touch you. So there are lots of ways to tighten up on this, and we're not in a big hurry. There are other activities going on. I've read in your newspapers that the remittances from the Chosen Soren have gone down a lot, which must get the attention of the North Korean authorities. So eventually they can either play ball with the international community and have a bright and happy future, or they can continue down the path they're on, with unpredictable consequences.

QUESTION: (Kato, Asahi Shimbun) Sir, following up about North Korea: What makes you think that North Korea will eventually give up nuclear weapons? If they do, they will just be one poor miserable country, which they would never like to be, so what's the roadmap here?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Aren't they already a poor, miserable country? Isn't that the burden of what we've heard from defectors? Isn't that what you've heard from the abductees? So they are already a poor country. Now, they're a poor country with nuclear weapons, so go on.

QUESTION: So what's the roadmap? We hear a lot about a roadmap in the Middle East, from the United States, but we don't hear about a roadmap for North Korea.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: As you know, my colleague, Mr. Kelly, laid before them a rather bold proposal that let them use their two paths. They can continue the path they're on, which is not a good one for the people or the nation of North Korea, or they could choose the path of giving up those weapons systems and bettering the lives of their people and having international assistance, and we made it very clear we'll do our part in that matter. This is a choice that Kim Jong Il and his colleagues are going to have to come to. So I think there's your roadmap. If it's anything, it's a fork in the road, and when you come to a fork in the road you have to take one or the other, so we'll see which they take. I think they're trying to decide.

QUESTION: Again on North Korea, recently we got some reports that North Korea is weakening its opposition against multilateral talks, and the question is, when do you expect that multilateral talks will occur, including Japan and South Korea?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: As you correctly point out, our desire is to have the formerly trilateral talks expanded to include Japan and South Korea, because of the equities both of your nations have, and I can't predict the timetable. We're ready for another series of multilateral talks. We look forward to getting a view from the North Koreans if they're ready. I can't tell you the date because we don't have a date. In the meantime, we'll continue our activities. We've got a TCOG coming up in Hawaii soon, where the United States, Japan and South Korea will make sure we consolidate and coordinate our own actions, and we'll wait to see when the North Koreans have something to say. In this regard, let me point out that it is our view, and I think it's the view of the government of Japan, that China has been absolutely first-rate in seeking a peaceful solution to this question and realizing that China, too, could be vitally affected by the way this comes out. So I want to salute the activities of the People's Republic of China.

QUESTION: (Yuasa, Sankei Shimbun) I'd like to change the subject to Middle East talks. How is this different, this time, the agreement or talks, compared with past years? Because international society knows that every agreement collapsed each time.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I think what's different this time with the Middle East peace process is two things. One is the global war on terrorism. It's quite clear that a terrorist is a terrorist, and those who kill civilians, those who kill innocents, non-combatants, in the name of some political philosophy are still terrorists, and they'll be treated that way. The second thing that has changed is that Yassir Arafat is out of the way. We have a new government and a new prime minister with Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen. He's a man of some capability and some credibility, and the Israeli government is willing to deal with him. They were not willing to deal with Yassir Arafat, who, after all, was a man who could not take "yes" for an answer during the Camp David talks, when most people credit the most far-reaching proposal ever had been put before the Palestinian leadership.

The third thing, and there is a third thing that's interesting, is our President, after having reached the conclusion that he could not deal with Arafat, said that we'd be ready to deal with a new government, and he joined with Tony Blair at Hillsborough Castle, and President Bush said, "I'm going to devote as much time and energy to the search for peace in the Middle East as Tony Blair devoted to the search for peace in Northern Ireland." Now that's a pretty far-reaching statement, and I think Mr. Bush just proved it by his actions and his comments, both at Sharm el-Sheikh and at Aqaba.

So having said that, and to sort of bow in your direction about the comments about the past plans, we immediately saw several Israeli policemen killed. There will be other activities by Hamas, who has not agreed to come to the table. What we'll have to see is whether the security forces of Abu Mazen are able to neutralize or disarm Hamas over some time. At first blush, the Israeli government seems to be giving Abu Mazen time. Mr. Sharon said today that the recent killings in Israeli would not stop or derail his search for peace. So it's a tough issue, but we're going to press on. Secretary Powell will be going to Jordan on the 23rd and 24th, following the ASEAN regional forum, to continue our efforts to try to bring about a more benign economic situation in the Middle East, one that can fuel positive growth rather than resentment and hatred.

QUESTION: Thank you, Takahata from the Mainichi Shimbun. I might have two questions.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: You might have? (laughter) You probably do.

QUESTION: The first one is, President Bush disclosed a new idea of a counter-proliferation regime after his visit to Europe. If you could elaborate on it, including so-called ship inspection, naval blockade, confiscation of goods and so on, part of it you already have done in the case of North Korea. How much of it is related to the role of Japan? That's the first question. What are your goals for tomorrow's strategic dialogue with Takeuchi-san?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: On the first question, President Bush in Poland made some comments about counter-proliferation regime and ideas that we have, and that we wanted to seek the ideas and views of some of our major partners, of course including Japan. It's not only devoted to North Korea - that's the immediate situation that we face here in Northeast Asia. It's more a recognition that we have some very good international regimes and non-proliferation, counter-proliferation agreements, that they in themselves aren't sufficient, particularly when it comes to dealing with transnational actors or states dealing with transnational actors. So we're seeking in the first instance the ideas of all of our friends, and how best to strengthen this up. We've had some ideas, but we're not the only ones with ideas, and we haven't even settled in our own mind on what's right. Some of it is, as I referred to in an earlier question, the use of intelligence to identify shipments and to inform people along the way. We can stop and board ships if we have reasons. We can narrow the number of ports that ships are allowed into so as to be able to inspect more regularly and more easily. We can provide intelligence in a more quick and efficient way in these matters if we're sure of the protection of that intelligence. There may also be, in the minds of some, and we welcome any ideas, an entire international regime with UN sanction that could be brought to the fore. We don't have all the answers, so we're seeking them.

On the question of tomorrow's meeting with Vice Foreign Minister Takeuchi and his colleagues, I believe, following Crawford, that we've reached a new level of understanding with our friends in Japan. Many of you know that I'm personally very gratified, because of the so-called Armitage Report, that almost all of the tenets in that report have been realized. I'm going to continue to do the absolute best I can for the American side, and hopefully our Japanese friends will want it, to assure that, to the extent it's comfortable in Japan, that they are treated just the way that we work with Great Britain - that we share information with them just the way we do with Great Britain, that we talk about our problems with Japan just like we do with Great Britain, and that we constantly ask for interaction so we can discuss the great issues of the day quietly and privately, so that we're not surprised when things happen. Our governments have a starting point before an issue comes to the fore. That's what I'm going to try to accomplish, and I'm quite sure that I'll find Mr. Takeuchi and his colleagues wanting to reciprocate. I don't think we needed so much the Bush-Koizumi at Crawford meeting, because we already had a pretty good relationship. But I think the signal that was sent there, and indeed the signal of sitting down, having the President of the United States sit down with the Prime Minister of Japan and the Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary and share his morning intelligence brief, said more about our relationship than any number of strategic dialogue meetings that we could hold.

Ina-san, nice to see you again.

QUESTION: (Ina, Nihon Keizai Shimbun) Thank you. It would be my privilege as the last question ...

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: We can go around again. (laughter) Or maybe a couple more!

QUESTION: The first one is just a follow-up on Takahata-san's on strategic dialogue. I think the strategic dialogue is not just a policy coordination talk. So you have a long-term agenda other than Iraq or North Korea. What would be interesting you? The other is that I'd like to know the current status of the struggle between neo-conservatives and neo-realists like you.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, clearly the realists are coming out on top. (laughter) Now on the question of the strategic dialogue, you're right, it's more than Iraq and North Korea. It's about energy in the Middle East, something that's of high interest to Japan. It's about the situation in Burma, where the SPDC continues to make one stupid decision after another, flying in the face of the international community. It's about HIV/AIDS and the effect that it's had throughout the world, but more particularly in Africa. There are a lot of aspects to it that are beyond just Iraq and just North Korea. I appreciate you bringing that out. On this battle of hawks and doves, unilateralists and multilateralists, neo-conservatives and neo-realists, I think the important point is at the end of the day, President Bush makes the decision. He's a strong guy, and he welcomes strong views. It's, I think, confusing sometimes to some of our friends that many of our strong views are put out like laundry on a laundry line for everyone to see. But the fact of the matter is we have a full exposition of all the issues, and at the end of the day, the president decides. That's a good thing, and I think the American public is well served by that. You wouldn't want a situation, and President Bush wouldn't want a situation, where everybody sits around at the tables of decision-making nodding their head at whatever the president says. That's not going to serve the public well. We have to have the debate, and we have it. I think that if there's a winner and a loser, it's the American people who are the winners for the process. Besides, it's good exercise time. (laughter)

Do you want to go a couple more questions? Yamada-san.

QUESTION: (Yamada, Jiji Press) Going back to China, since the Bush administration came into office, you had a relationship between the U.S. and China as kind of a strategic competitor, not a strategic partner, but as one thing led to another, particularly in (inaudible) the crisis has been heightened to the extent that we have to be consulting with Russia and China. So, am I right in saying that the nature of what China means to this region is slightly different than it used to be?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Yes, it's a good question. Certainly historically one of the more interesting facets of modern U.S.-China relations is that it has been Republican administrations who have always had the best relationships, whether it was the opening to China, or during the 80s when we started on a very bad foot with China with the cancellation of some high-level visits that were coming to Washington, etc., or now with the Bush administration, we started with the EP-3 incident and people predicted that we'd never be able to get along with China, but things change. What changes is, I think, China has taken a much more far-sighted and helpful role in her region, particularly on the question of North Korea. Thus far, also being, I think, somewhat restrained in the question of Taiwan. The United States, for our part, although we saw China as a strategic competitor, we also said that competition could be good or bad. If it were a military competition, it would be bad for the region. If it's a competition for ideas and for markets and all that, it's to be welcomed. It'll make us all better. I think you'd be absolutely correct to say that we're in a new phase of our relationship with China, and one that I think both of us look to have even greater developments. It's fairly comfortable right now with China.

QUESTION: What about your expectations for the TCOG meeting in Hawaii later this week?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I expect that we'll have it.

QUESTION: Are you also expecting that the three countries will reach some kind of agreement on specific tougher measures they're willing to take?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, I think that the members there at the TCOG would not be able themselves to reach those decisions. Those are national decisions that would have to be carried back to the leadership, in this case of Japan or South Korea. But they'll certainly discuss the full range of issues, and then we'll see where we are. But TCOG is important to us because it allows us to sort of expose issues to everyone so there are no surprises and things of that nature. But beyond that I'm not going to predict what will come out. Whatever, decisions will have to be referred back to capitols. They're not going to make them in Honolulu.

QUESTION: You said that the North Koreans are shown two paths.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Yes, a path in and a path out. A fork in the road.

QUESTION: Are you personally optimistic the North Koreans will be persuaded to take the good path? It seems quite likely they're going to choose the bad path, and they'll face the unpredicted consequences.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, I think my crystal ball looking into the future is just as muddy as yours is, and I ... Ina-san has just described me as a realist, and if that's the case, I'll be realistic and say that it's tough, it's tough to imagine that they will all of a sudden turn over a new leaf. But it's not impossible, and you can't do what our President wants, that is, to really try to seek to find a diplomatic and peaceful solution, if in the back of your mind you're always thinking about going to war. That's why we always say we do seek a diplomatic and peaceful solution, and we have no intention of invading North Korea. We say this over and over again in the hopes that they'll understand it. At the same time, we don't take any options off the table. That would be silly. But I would not describe myself as anything other than realistic about the difficulties of the issue. Not optimistic or pessimistic.

I had Kato-san ...

QUESTION: (Kato, Asahi Shimbun) Yes, realigning on Okinawa. The LA Times story a couple of weeks ago recorded that the Pentagon is planning to move the Marines in Okinawa to Australia, and Secretary Wolfowitz denied it. But at the same time, Koizumi and President Bush agreed on reducing the footprint in Okinawa when they met in Crawford, and I was wondering, what do you think are the possibilities and plans to reduce the burden on Okinawa within the framework of a realignment?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, I've got to defer to my colleagues at the Department of Defense. I talked to Paul Wolfowitz about this. The LA Times story was completely wrong, and Paul correctly nailed it, and we haven't had any discussions with the Australians, etc. The question of the footprint in Okinawa is one that has remained from SACO times, and through the so-called Armitage report, which is actually the Armitage-Nye report. (laughter) If it were the Democrats it would be the Nye-Armitage report. (laughter) But since the Republicans are in, we'll call it the Armitage-Nye report. (laughter) The issue of the footprint, in the first instance, has to do with consolidations and things of that nature that you know about. I think it's premature, by far, to speculate on relocations or redistributions, etc. until U.S. and Japanese military officials sit down and study these issues.

QUESTION: This is just a follow up on the same line. If you consider the realignment of U.S. Forces on the Korean Peninsula, what kind of effect has it had on your presence here in Japan? Also, weren't you the one who had been advocating the withdrawal of the U.S. Marine Corps from Okinawa?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Was I the one?

QUESTION: Yes.

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: I want to -- the first question and the second question. I don't think that a realignment on the Peninsula of Korea has an affect on Japan. Now if you talked about a withdrawal from the Korean Peninsula, that would be different. But a realignment, I don't think that has an effect. Yes, I have speculated from time to time on withdrawing Marines from Okinawa, because it's become so difficult to exercise and things of that nature. It's not a total withdrawal, but I want our Marine forces wherever they can best affect security cooperation. Now the difficulty is not sending wrong signals. If we were to all of a sudden ... If the Department of Defense were to decide to move the Marine Corps now, I think the only one that would please immediately would be North Korea. The reason the Marines stayed in Okinawa long after reversion had to do with three great items - location, location, location. It allows them to be used in the region. But we're going, as I've suggested, the Department of Defense is going to a more global approach in these matters, and who knows where that will lead us. But it's not going to be something that's effective tomorrow, or even next year. So ...

QUESTION: How do you see the current situation, your assessment of Japanese right to collective defense, which you referred to also in your report?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: In my report, I refer to it as something that inhibited U.S.-Japan military cooperation for obvious reasons, and I'm absolutely delighted that some Japanese government officials have spoken out recently and expressed their views that it's time for a full, complete and open airing of the question. I think that's appropriate for a great democracy. I'm not going to predict the outcome of it. I think it's very healthy. It's a very healthy phenomenon. One more.

QUESTION: There was some criticism of U.S. policy on North Korea, saying that the focus of U.S. policy for North Korea is on proliferation of nuclear weapons or proliferation of missile technology. Some say that the U.S. government should put much more focus on making them give up weapons themselves. Could you comment on that?

DEPUTY SECRETARY ARMITAGE: Well, in truth, when Mr. Kelly went to North Korea he raised several concerns. It wasn't just a matter of proliferation. It was a matter of possession of weapons of mass destruction. It was missile development. It was forward deployed conventional forces that are very heavily forward deployed conventional forces. And human rights in North Korea. So his agenda was for ... all of which are concerns to all nations who ... Then the question that you raise about proliferation. In the first instance, they've already said they have nuclear weapons. We do want to roll that back. But more than that, we have to stop proliferation. We've got to keep the hard currency that North Korea could earn from the hands of Kim Jong Il by preventing proliferation. If you are able to do that, then maybe you can get them to realize that the better path for them, on this fork in the road, is one that leads to more international respectability and acceptance. And, by the way, access to assistance, as a way to go forward in the future. We have a saying, it's kind of irreligious, but we say there's only one way to eat an elephant. Do you know how you eat an elephant? You eat it one bite at a time. (laughter) I think in the North Korean situation, you have to eat it one bite at a time. So if you stop the proliferation, you cut down on the hard currency. If you cut down on the hard currency, you restrict the freedom of movement of the regime, and maybe they'll start thinking about having the other path, the better path.

I thank you all very much. I'm sure I'll see some of you in the next couple of days. But I'm absolutely thrilled, as I say, to be back here, but most of all to be able to present an award. This award tonight will be the first time it's ever been presented to a Japanese citizen, ever. It's pretty exciting for Secretary Powell, and for me. Thank you very much.

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