



Remarks With South Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki-Moon After Their Meeting

Secretary Colin L. Powell

C Street Entrance
Washington, DC
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(2:10 p.m. EST)



SECRETARY POWELL: Well, good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm very pleased to receive at the Department today the new Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea, Foreign Minister Ban. We've had a very good discussion. We have had a chance to talk on the phone already before he even became Foreign Minister, and he is well known to us from his assignments here in Washington on previous occasions.

In our discussion today, we reviewed our bilateral relationship, which is very, very strong at this moment. I thanked the Minister for the contribution that Korea is making to the rebuilding effort in Iraq as well as providing forces to assist in those efforts.

As you might expect, we talked quite a bit about the recently concluded six-way talks on the North Korean nuclear program. We are both quite satisfied with the way those talks went. We have come out of those talks with an institutionalized process to move forward in further discussions at working group and plenary level.

The United States understands that this is a difficult issue for all of us, but we are determined to go forward and work with our partners in the region, the other members of the group that believes as we do that complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement of North Korea's programs must be the policy that we will follow.

We will be patient in pursuing this policy. The President strongly believes that a diplomatic solution is possible and we are not in any urgency to achieve that solution. We want a good solution and we want to continue to work with South Korea, with Japan, with Russia and with China toward that end.

We do not desire any conflict with North Korea. I think we have made this clear repeatedly in all of the conversations that we have had in the six-way talks and in other fora. And we look forward to continuing this work.

Mr. Minister, it's a great pleasure to have you here and I look forward to working with you in the months ahead.

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. And thank you very much, Secretary Powell, for your kind reception and hospitality, which I have enjoyed very much.

I'm very much overwhelmed by the warmth of American Administration and people during my stay. As Secretary Powell mentioned, we have had a very useful and constructive meeting on many issues of our mutual interest, including North Korean nuclear issues and our common efforts to build Iraq to a peaceful and rehabilitated country and also on many other issues of our -- to our mutual benefit.

As for the Iraq dispatch, Secretary Powell conveyed the Administration's appreciation to the dispatch of our additional troops to Iraq. I explained that the main purpose of our troop dispatch to Iraq is to help Iraqi people to reconstruct and rehabilitate their country and restore peace. We also agreed to cooperate closely to make our two militaries successfully carry out their missions in Iraq.

As for the nuclear -- North Korean nuclear issues, we share the view that we have produced a generally positive result from the second round of six-party talks, in a sense that we have first -- adopted the first agreed document in the form of a chairman's statement. And more importantly, we have agreed to produce a process, continue the process of dialogue by agreeing to the venue and timeline of the third round of six-party talks and also agreed to set up a working group.

We discussed to continue our consultation. And as for structure, Secretary Powell and I instructed our respective chief delegate to six-party talks, Assistant Secretary James Kelly and Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Soo-hyuk, to consult more in-depth to discuss about the formation of working group, and also early convening of a third round of talks.

We agreed that to coordinate fully to address the North Korean nuclear issue as soon as possible. We are also in same view that North Korea nuclear issue should be resolved in a complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement, CVID, and this issue should be resolved in a peaceful manner through dialogue.

Lastly, but not least, we were very much assured by President Bush and also Secretary Powell's reassurance that the relocation of U.S. forces in Korea will be carried out in a manner not to weaken the combined defense capabilities in the Korean Peninsula. We agreed to continue our discussions in the ongoing FOTA talks.

Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, do you sense that North Korea is edging closer toward acknowledgement of a highly uranium enriched program?

SECRETARY POWELL: I wouldn't go that far. I think what we conveyed to the North Koreans in a clear manner is that, as we go forward, all aspects of their program must fall under the CVID rubric. I'm confident that a day will come when we're in working group format, that we will have to join this discussion with North Korea, and we're prepared to share with them what we know about their program.

And as far as we're concerned, they have admitted it one time previously. They have subsequently denied it. But we're relatively confident about our information, and we'll just have to see. But I will let the North Koreans speak for themselves at the moment.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary --

SECRETARY POWELL: Let's have one of the Korean --

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, today's *Washington Post* reported that United States' patience on North Korea could run out. Does it mean United States have any time limit or red line for North Korea?

SECRETARY POWELL: No, I read the report. I read the headline, and then I read the entire article, looking for the evidence that we are running out of patience, and didn't come across that evidence. The President is looking for a diplomatic solution. He's working hard on it. We have shown patience. And as long as we are seeing progress, we are going to continue to work with the six-party format and our friends to achieve our CVID objectives.

And we hope that over time North Korea will come to the conclusion that they are better off as a nation, and their people are better off, by working with us to solve this problem so that we can begin to assist North Korea with its very severe needs with respect to energy and other things that they need.

And some of our friends in the recent round of six-party talks made it clear to the North Koreans that as soon as they agreed to a CVID and started the process of CVID with a freeze, they might immediately benefit from some of the parties, not the United States or Japan, but some of the other parties who are prepared to make contributions at this time.

QUESTION: Can I talk to Secretary Ban?

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: Yes.

QUESTION: South Korea seems to be a simply intermediary between North Korea and United States. Can -- do South Korea do more positive and stronger moves toward North Korea than China is doing right now?

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: First of all, I'd like to make clarification about your word "intermediary." We are not the intermediary between United States and North Korea. We are trying to do some facilitating role in making six-party talks dialogue going -- moving smoothly. Republic of Korea has been taking important initiatives and in close coordination with the United States and Japan.

Also, we have been receiving very constructive assistance and role from Chinese Government. So we will continue this kind of initiative role in making North Korean issue resolved as soon as possible.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, if, as you say, there is patience and no particular urgency to get to a solution, does that not raise the concern that the North Koreans can continue their programs, and so, make it so much harder to actually reverse them?

SECRETARY POWELL: When I say patience, I want to make sure everybody understood that I wanted to convey the message that we are not in some new state of crisis, as suggested by the newspaper article this morning, that somehow we are running out of time or are running out of steam on our diplomatic efforts.

The President has made it clear that we believe there is a diplomatic solution to this problem, and it is a problem we want to approach in as firm a manner as we can and as speedily a manner as we can, but there is no sense of urgency in the sense that we are running out of time and if something doesn't happen in the next month or two then the process will fall apart. It will not. It is a strong process, I think, getting stronger with each meeting.

Now, meanwhile, the North Koreans do have a program. They say they have reprocessed all of their rods, the 8,000 rods. They have brought people in to look at the facility at Yongbyon. And I cannot verify whether they have or have not reprocessed all those rods.

The one thing I do know is that whatever they are doing or not doing, they will not force us or pressure us into any kind of a deal that is anything short of CVID. And that is the position of five of the six parties to these talks, and we'll remain firm in that position. And the actions they are taking are only keeping them away from benefits that they need, benefits that will serve them much better than having a nuclear weapons program and fuel rods.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Mr. Secretary, the --

SECRETARY POWELL: Excuse me a minute, please. This young lady.

QUESTION: Yes, it's been two rounds of six-party talks, but we don't see the U.S. and North Korea's position get any -- get much closer. Will the U.S. consider taking additional steps, for example, more direct talks with North Korea, or draft security assurance first to show the U.S. good faith?

SECRETARY POWELL: We are going to continue to pursue this in the six-party talks. Within that six-party talk framework, we have had direct conversations -- not negotiations -- but direct conversations with the North Koreans.

I think we have made it clear that the possibility of a security agreement is there, and they are familiar with what elements might be in such an agreement. We have made it clear that we have no intention to attack them.

And we've also made it clear to them that over time, if they realize that CVID is in their interest, the United States still has on the table the bold approach that Assistant Secretary Kelly presented some time ago where, in due course, as we go down the CVID road, benefits will accrue to North Korea, which will help them out of the difficult situation they are in now.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, the phrase "rolling up the network" has been used in reference to A.Q. Khan's proliferation activities. Sir, what kind of progress has the U.S. and Pakistan made on that front in terms of finding out which countries he's helped?

Thank you.

SECRETARY POWELL: We've learned a great deal about the A.Q. Khan network and information that we had before recent revelations as well as additional information we've acquired from the Pakistani authorities as a result of their inquiries. And so I think we're learning a great deal more about the network and we are tracing the network to all of his various customers and all of the different parts of the network infrastructure. And I think we have pretty much taken the network apart in the sense that it isn't going to be doing much in the future, and we are going to work hard to pull up everything that we know about it from the past.

Thank you.

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: Thank you very much.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you, Mr. Minister.

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary.

(The Secretary escorts the Foreign Minister to his car.)

QUESTION: Haiti?

SECRETARY POWELL: What about it? You know everything about it.

QUESTION: I was just wanted to ask whether anyone in the U.S. Government or the Embassy in the South African Republic has had any contact with Mr. Aristide since he actually arrived there.

SECRETARY POWELL: I haven't. We haven't.

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