



Interview with Hyun Jung Song of Korea Broadcast System (KBS TV)

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Seoul, Republic of Korea
October 26, 2004

QUESTION: Thank you for being with us on KBS, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POWELL: My pleasure

QUESTION: Oh, the pleasure is mine. Let me first begin with the political issues. I heard that you and Mr. Ban talked about the Koreans no visa entrance to the United States. Could you please elaborate on this?

SECRETARY POWELL: We did talk about the issue of visas. After 9/11, the United States had to tighten our controls with respect to the issuance of visas and who was coming into our country. It slowed down the whole visa process. In the last year, it has gotten better. We want to speed up the issuing of visas.

I know that there is a desire in the Republic of Korea for Korea to be treated as a no visa country. That's something that we can look at, but at the moment because of the policies we currently have in place and the laws that we have to follow, I am not able to say that Korea can become a no visa country at this time. But we're constantly reviewing our policies.

What we are doing is working very hard to make it much easier to apply for visas, get the interviews you need, and to shorten the time from the application for a visa until the visa is received, because we want Koreans to come to the United States. We want them to come and visit Disneyland and go to New York City, to go to our universities, to visit their many relatives in the United States, so we're doing everything we can to make it easier. But it will take us some time before we could review and make any changes to our Visa Waiver Program.

QUESTION: Okay. Thank you. Turning over to wrap up the three-nation Asian tour that has been dominated by the North Korean impasse. And now diplomacy is diplomacy, so haven't you ever considered to visit the North as a Secretary to make a breakthrough on this issue as Madeleine Albright did four years ago?

SECRETARY POWELL: Madeleine Albright did visit North Korea and while she was visiting North Korea and celebrating the Agreed Framework, North Korea was hard at work trying to find another way to make a nuclear weapon through the enrichment of uranium.

I am not ready to even think about visiting North Korea until we have gotten North Korea to agree to eliminate its program, totally. All parts of its program. And the way to do that is through our Six-Party Talks. Good proposals have been put forward. The members of the Six-Party group invite North Korea to come back to the table for a fourth round of talks so we can move this process forward. But what North Korea wants to do is to isolate this issue and make it just a U.S.-North Korea issue. Well, why should it be just a U.S.-North Korea issue? North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons is a danger to every one of its neighbors. It's a threat to the region. And the region has said, no, this is a six-party matter that has to be dealt with in the Six-Party framework, not the American Secretary of State going to Pyongyang.

QUESTION: Just within the Six-Party framework?

SECRETARY POWELL: Um-hum.

QUESTION: Not in the direct ...

SECRETARY POWELL: The Six-Party framework.

QUESTION: Thank you. With your long and respectable career as a commander, so do you estimate that the North Korean force is a grave threat to the U.S. and to the Asian region?

SECRETARY POWELL: I believe that North Korea has spent the last 50 years using its wealth and treasure to build up a military force. It is a military force that is well known to the United States, well known to the people of Korea. We have seen this force hanging just north of the demilitarized zone as a potential threat to South Korea. So, North Korea has been a threat to the region and we are not in this region, but our allies are in this region. And we have been an ally of South Korea all these years and we came to South Korea's aid when it was invaded in 1950 by North Korea.

And so, we hope that North Korea will reach a point in its political development where they realize that investing in weapons is doing nothing for their people and it is not going to get them anywhere. And we hope that they will start to redirect their resources into building up their economy and building up their society and that they will eliminate nuclear weapons programs so that the world can come in and assist them.

QUESTION: On the same, maybe in the same texture, when you mentioned, I'm not sure the exact time, but maybe in Japan, you mentioned that North Korea is a terrorist country. And a terrorist report released by your State Department in this year saying that there is no specific evidence to clarify that the North Korean government has been supporting terrorist acts since 1987, I'm not sure the exact time, the 1987 Korean Air attack. President Roh also mentioned about this, so?

SECRETARY POWELL: In the context of the comment that I made, it was when we were discussing the fact that North Korea, as a state, had abducted Japanese citizens. And what I was saying was this wasn't done by a terrorist organization, it was done by a terrorist state. At the time when North Korea went and abducted Japanese citizens to take them back to North Korea to do what they wanted with them, that was a terrorist act by a terrorist state. The KAL was a terrorist act. Now, they may not have conducted any similar activities in recent years, but the context of which I answered that question, the abduction of Japanese citizens, was a terrorist act committed by a terrorist state.

QUESTION: So, do you have any other criteria for to specify this?

SECRETARY POWELL: That was the reason that I answered the question the way I did because it had to do with the abduction issue and that was it. But you know, let's not overlook the pattern of behavior of this nation over the years. It was a Korean airliner that we're talking about, right? And we have seen acts by the North Koreans that have been troubling. North Korea participates in a great deal of criminal activity with respect to counterfeiting: counterfeiting of money, counterfeiting of cigarettes, and so it is a nation that has to make some basic changes as to the way it behaves in order to be accepted by the international community.

QUESTION: Let me go to another issue. President Bush signed the Human Rights Act regarding North Korea and the North Korean government is calling your legislature as hostile act to have some intention to turn over their regime.

SECRETARY POWELL: The legislation says nothing about turning over their regime, and it's not a hostile act. It's not invading North Korea. It's speaking up for the North Korean people who cannot speak up for themselves. It's a statement of fundamental basic human rights. And I think that the people of the world should welcome an expression from the American Congress about the human rights behavior of the North Korean regime, as opposed to being critical of the United States Congress. It was that kind of statement of human rights that gave encouragement to the people behind the Iron Curtain when the Soviet Union was still there. It seems to me quite appropriate for us to speak clearly that human rights in North Korea should be an issue for all of us who believe in the dignity of the individual and the universality of human rights.

QUESTION: Let's go to the last question. There is a speculation raised by the U.S. high-level officials saying that South Korea's unreported experiments with the nuclear substances look like it should be referred to the United States Security Council. And you told today that you expressed your understanding of this matter in the meeting with Minister Chung and you repeatedly urged that this a minor issue. So, I interpret this as a sure sign to a positive way to dealing with this?

SECRETARY POWELL: It was a minor issue. There is no question in my mind or in the mind of any American official that South Korea was moving in the direction of a nuclear weapons program. That's absurd. So, these were minor experiments that the IAEA has now examined, and the IAEA will discuss it at their November meeting. And we will see what the Board of Governors decides on this matter, but I'm quite confident that the judgment of the IAEA will be that these are minor experiments and they have been accounted for to the IAEA. And this should bring the matter to a close. What the IAEA wishes to do with the matter is for the IAEA to make a judgment, and we will wait for their report to see what the report says.

QUESTION: You are quite sure that this is a minor issue?

SECRETARY POWELL: Yes. I'm quite sure it's minor. The question is how to make sure everybody in the world understands it and get this behind us. But, everything I have examined and all the information available to me, given to me by my South Korean colleagues, and what we know, suggests this was a minor matter. And I'm quite sure that the IAEA will see it as a minor problem with experimentation and not anything for the international community to be worried about.

QUESTION: Maybe time is up.

SECRETARY POWELL: Okay. Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

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