



Remarks With South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon After Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
 Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
 Seoul, Korea
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FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: (In Korean) Secretary Rice and I had a very useful and in-depth consultation on the ROK-U.S. alliance and the North Korean nuclear issue. We both expressed satisfaction on the fact that the ROK-U.S. alliance, based on a firm foundation, has been steadily developing into a comprehensive and dynamic partnership. In particular, Secretary Rice expressed a deep gratitude for the dispatch of our soldiers to Iraq and Afghanistan as a symbol of the rock solid ROK-U.S. alliance.

On the North Korean nuclear issue, Secretary Rice and I have reviewed the latest developments as well as the diplomatic efforts made by our two countries since we last met in Washington, D.C., on the 14th of February. At today's meeting, we reaffirmed our commitment to realize the peaceful and diplomatic resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, and agreed that North Korea should return to the negotiating table without further delay.



Secretary Rice and I share the view that the resumption of the Six Party Talks itself is not the objective, and that it is more important to achieve substantial progress for the resolution of the nuclear issue. To this end, we agreed to continue to cooperate closely with each other.

Our two countries are ready to discuss and seriously negotiate all issues of concern, including those of North Korea, at the Six Party Talks framework. Within the context of the Six Party Talks, diverse formats of discussions including direct dialogue between the U.S. and North Korea would be possible.

Secretary Rice and I agreed to continue to consult closely on issues of mutual interest, including the North Korean nuclear issue. Over luncheon, we will be further discussing other matters of mutual interest, such as the pending issues related to our alliance. Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. I'm delighted to be back in Seoul. And I have been in office for I think less than two months now and I was delighted to have a chance to come here early to emphasize how much value the United States attaches to the relationship, the alliance with the Republic of Korea, an alliance that is based on democratic values and our shared desire for peace in the region.

We have, of course, together been able to maintain peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific that has allowed the emergence of economic prosperity in this region, as well as the emergence of strong democracies like the Republic of Korea.

But, of course, our relationship is also global and I wanted to thank the Korean people for their contributions to Iraq and stability there, and to stability in Afghanistan, vital contributions to the war on terror, but also vital contributions to the spread of democracy in those difficult places.

Today, the Foreign Minister and I discussed our shared commitment to a peaceful, denuclearized Korean Peninsula. We will devote maximum efforts to our work in the Six Party Talks, to the multilateral diplomacy that should lead to an end to North Korea's nuclear ambitions and to its nuclear weapons program.

We also agreed that the Six Party Talks are the best way for North Korea to receive the respect that it desires and the assistance that it needs. We will continue to coordinate very, very closely on this important issue.

I am sure that over lunch, we will have an opportunity to talk about the realignment of U.S. Forces Korea that is now under way, a realignment that will return valuable urban land to the Korean people, while we continue to modernize the alliance so that it can maintain peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula.

I want to thank President Roh, with whom I met earlier. I want to thank you, Mr. Minister, for our meeting. And I look forward to continued close cooperation with you and with the Korean government.

QUESTION: (In Korean.)

SECRETARY RICE: Sorry, I need translation. (Laughter.)

INTERPRETER: At the current situation, due to the problems concerning the Dokdo Island, ROK-Japan relations are -- have been -- are in a bad situation. Korean government has expressed that it will be difficult for us to support the Japanese government in its bid for entering into the U.N. Security Council if the Japanese government does not show a certain degree of apology. And this is the same with other countries who have been -- who have received the scars of war from the Japanese.

However, at a lecture, Secretary Rice has expressed -- at a lecture in Japan, Secretary Rice has expressed that the American government supports Japan's entrance into the U.N. Security Council. The Korean people are wondering why this remark has been made at such a situation. Is this done intentionally, or does Secretary Rice need a deeper understanding of the relations between ROK and Japan?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, the United States first made known publicly that we intended to support Japan for a permanent seat in the Security Council last August. It was made public by Secretary Powell. And we have also said that we support Security Council reform in the context of broader United Nations reform. And we are at the beginning of that process, not at the end of it.

Our view is that we have good relations with our democratic ally here in the Republic of Korea. Let me make this clear: we have good relations of the Republic of Korea, which is democratic. And we have good relations with Japan, which is also a democratic ally.

Because we -- the United States -- have been able to maintain those relationships, because we have maintained military alliances in the region, because we have strong economic commerce in this region and have for several decades, this region has been able to develop into one which is prosperous and one in which strong democracies are now present.

I said also in Japan that the 21st century will be different than in the past, when power will be defined in terms of the power of ideas, and we with the Republic of Korea, also with Japan, are pursuing the power of the ideal of freedom, and we are doing it globally.

QUESTION: Madam Secretary, if I heard the Foreign Minister correctly, he seemed to suggest that the Six Party Talks offer a venue for the United States to talk directly to North Korea and that seems to be somewhat at odds with your description of the Six Party Talks as quite the opposite of the way to avoid the one-on-one relationship that you've said North Korea seems to want and which it has said is helpful. Do you have a different opinion on what the Six Party Talks are and how they go forward?

And, to the Foreign Minister, would direct U.S.-North Korean diplomacy be helpful in your view?

SECRETARY RICE: My understanding, and we've just talked about this, is we have exactly the same view of the Six Party Talks, which is that there are six parties. And the importance of the fact that there are six parties is we have at least with the United States, Japan, South Korea, Russia and China, a very strong view that this should be a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula. Now, it's also well known that when we are at the table, we are talking to each other. Everybody can't talk at once, so of course we are talking to each other.

But this is in a Six Party framework. The reason that sometimes I think the North Koreans press for so-called bilateral talks is that they would like to get back to a time when it was an issue between the United States and North Korea. This is not an issue between the United States and North Korea. A non-nuclear Korean Peninsula is in the very strong national interests of the United States, of Japan -- we just heard that from the Japanese. We've heard that from the South Korean Foreign Minister. The Chinese have said it. The Russians have said it. And so, this is not an issue of the United States and North Korea, this is an issue of the neighborhood and what kind of Korean Peninsula we are going to have.

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: (in Korean) Let me add to what Secretary Rice has said. Direct dialogue within the framework of the Six Party Talks, between the U.S. and the DPRK, this idea has been consulted with in depth between the ROK and the U.S. and we have reached a common understanding on this issue. During my last visit to Washington, D.C., I have confirmed this with the U.S. government, and I have also said this during my interview with CNN. So, with direct dialogue between these two countries within the framework of the Six Party Talks would be helpful. And as Secretary Rice said, the North Korean nuclear issue is not a domestic issue in Korea; it's a regional issue and it's a global issue, and in that regard, that was what I was referring to when I made that remark earlier.

SECRETARY RICE: And let me just say that is exactly our understanding: that, of course, when we're at the table, there are sometimes direct dialogues between the United States and North Korea, in the context of the Six Party Talks. Because what we will not do is to separate out the United States from the others in the Six Party Talks.

QUESTION: (in Korean) I am Director Wan Soong Tek (phonetic) of YTN. My question refers to -- is directed at Secretary Rice.

With regard to the North Korean nuclear issue, I have two questions. Yesterday, at the lecture in Japan, you have mentioned that North Korea is a sovereign state. And this is a unique remark coming from a high-level official of the United States. In this regard, was this remark made to make the atmosphere better, or is this another way of asking the North Koreans to be more forthcoming? Or are you planning something else?

With regard to your second question, you have mentioned that after your visits to these countries in Asia, and if North Korea does not come up with a decision that the U.S. might rely on tactics of pressure, this has also been mentioned by Ambassador Hill at his Senate hearing, that this situation cannot continue, this situation cannot be left as it is. I would like to ask about your position on these questions.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much. First of all, I think it's a statement of fact that North Korea is a sovereign state. It's in the United Nations. We're in negotiations with it in the Six Party Talks. The North Koreans also know that the United States has said repeatedly that we have no intention of invading or attacking North Korea. And, in fact, if North Korea is prepared to make a strategic choice, we have said that, within the context of the Six Party Talks, there could be security assurances for North Korea.

It is also the case that there is a proposal on the table in the Six Party Talks in addition to the idea of six -- of security assurances within the Six Party Talks, the parties have said that they are prepared to study North Korea and address North Korea's energy needs. Some of the parties have talked about fuel deliveries to the North Koreans. And I might just note that outside the context of the Six Party Talks, the United States continues to be a large food aid donor to try and alleviate the suffering of the North Korean people.

So, I would hope that, all of this taken together, would suggest to North Korea that the Six Party Talks are the place that they can actually get the respect that they have desired and that they can get the assistance that they need. It is true that we need to resolve this issue; it cannot go on forever. But the United States has been committed to this route, to this diplomatic, multilateral forum, and we remain committed to trying and make it work.

The Foreign Minister and I did talk about intensifying our efforts, all of us, including hopefully the Chinese, because we do need to address the problem.

INTERPRETER: If I may, the reporter had also asked whether these topics have been discussed at the meeting with President Roh Moo-hyun this morning?

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, we did discuss the Six Party Talks with the President this morning.

QUESTION: Secretary Rice, you're off to Beijing next. And, as you well know, China's military spending has been growing in double digit rates for at least a decade. I'm wondering what about that you find concerning and what kind of an impact would a lifting of the EU arms embargo have on that? And, finally, what will the United States do to respond?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, of course, it's concerning because the United States is in the Pacific and its military presence in the Pacific is there simply to try and maintain a stable environment. I think we have managed over the last decades to maintain a stable environment, and that is why we have had the conditions for economic growth and for political development of democracies in this region. And so obviously anything that would appear to try and alter that balance would be of concern to us.

The United States will, of course, maintain and modernize its forces to make certain that the military balance can be maintained in the Asia Pacific so that the region can continue along a peaceful path, can continue along a democratic path, and can continue in economic prosperity.

We have a lot of work that we can and will do with China. I think the relationship has been constructive. It's been constructive in getting together for the Six Party Talks. China has been constructive in the war on terrorism. I've even noted that China is as far away as Haiti in supporting police operations there. So there is a lot that we can do with China that is constructive. We have our differences, and China's internal transformation is still under way.

Sorry, forgot about the translation. Sorry.

And as to the EU arms embargo, we've been very clear. Our view is that it is not appropriate in terms of either its original reason, which had to do with Tiananmen, but also that the United States, Japan, South Korea are Pacific powers, that we are committed to a peaceful and stable Asia Pacific region, that there are concerns about the rise of Chinese military spending and potentially Chinese military power and its increasing sophistication. And that the European Union should do nothing to contribute to a circumstance in which Chinese military modernization draws on European technology or even the political decision to suggest that it could draw on European technology when, in fact, it is the United States -- not Europe -- that has defended the Pacific.

Thank you.

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