



Remarks to the Press Pool En Route Alaska

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

En Route Anchorage, Alaska

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SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. And we're on our way to Asia for the second time since I've been Secretary. So I thought it was important to come out to the region before the summer break, so to speak, begins. Obviously, there is a broad agenda out here. It has also been a time of pretty active diplomacy on some of the issues of concern to us, including the six-party talks with particularly the South Koreans and the North Koreans having had discussions.

I recently saw the unification minister when he was back in Washington. I had a chance to see my -- both my Russian and Japanese counterparts when I was at the G8 ministerial just a couple of weeks ago in London. And so this is a good time to take stock, to have a chance to talk to the various parties and to continue our efforts to move forward on this agenda, to move forward toward talks -- but talks that would actually be aimed at the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and hopefully would make some progress.

Obviously, I'll talk about a number of other issues as well, human rights concerns, religious freedom with China. We've just had some recent contacts between the Tibetans and the Chinese. I want to follow up on that.

And with the Japanese, we have a wide-ranging agenda. I'll want to talk also to the South Koreans and the Japanese about continuing progress on our defense cooperation and the number of steps and restructuring that are being taken there.

So it will be a broad agenda, but obviously, I'm looking forward to taking stock for how people see the lay of the land now concerning the six-party talks.

QUESTION: Secretary Rice, we're hearing growing concern in Beijing as well as elsewhere that the North Koreans may actually show up at the talks but then refuse to say anything. What do you think needs to be done to make those talks work?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first we have to have talks. So I don't want to get ahead of us. But obviously, you don't have talks just for the sake of talks; you have talks to try and make progress. And I think we have made clear, and in fact a number of the parties to the six-party talks have made clear that the expectations would be that we would be working toward some progress.

Now, I can't judge how the North Koreans would behave if they were to come there. But I would just remind everyone that we have a proposal on the table. We have reiterated the elements of that proposal including the New York channel. And so there is something there for the North Koreans to react to if they choose to. It's not as if we're starting from a blank slate and everybody has to try and make it up. We know where we are in the six-party talks and I would hope that if they get started again, there would be some reaction to that proposal.

QUESTION: Do you think the North Koreans understand now that under any scenario under which they would give up their nuclear weapons that there is no way for them to receive energy assistance that would include nuclear power?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, our view of this is very clear, that there are attendant proliferation risks with nuclear power that are hard to -- hard to minimize, given the history with North Korea. Right now, the -- what is on the table, in addition to what the South Koreans may be willing to do, what is on the table is that the parties are prepared to examine North Korea's energy needs and to see what recommendations could be made to deal with those energy needs. And I think that's the sensible way to go about this. Let's see what the needs are.

And obviously, the proliferation risks attendant to nuclear power are very great, and it has been one of our concerns all along, and I felt the South Koreans had some very useful thoughts, and that's something I'd like to follow up with them when I'm here.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, we're told that when you talk to the Chinese, you're going to ask them what next steps will help advance the North Koreans to come back to the talks they might be willing to accept, since almost everything that we might want to do depends on their agreement. What are you hoping they'll agree to? What are you hoping they will say to you?

SECRETARY RICE: As I said, that is a matter of diplomatic activity, and so I am prepared to listen to what the Chinese have been doing with the North Koreans. I'm certain that there have been contacts there. I'm also prepared to hear what they are prepared to do.

But rather than have a sense of this as negative leverage -- in other words, I'm going to ask them what they'll do if the talks don't resume -- I'm going to ask them, how do we get the talks resumed? And I think there is actually plenty on the table from the point of view of the North Koreans for them to desire resumption of the talks. And I would like to get the Chinese view of that. But we're not asking -- I don't expect to start with a specific list of things that I would like them to do.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, do you think there will be any discussion at all of the possibility of taking or referring this issue to the U.N. Security Council?

SECRETARY RICE: The Security Council route is always there. But we've been focused on trying to get the six-party talks restarted, and restarted in a way that might actually make progress, that would focus first on what is actually on the table.

There are some pretty clear principles that the other parties have been -- have been operating under. The Korean Peninsula has to be non-nuclear, for instance, just as a starting point. And that that means that something has to be done about the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

There are also principles on the table that the United States has no intention to invade or attack North Korea. I think if they hear that from the United States, they would certainly believe that that would be in the security assurances of any of the other parties. And, of course, as I said, the question of how we might provide for North Korea's actual energy needs.

So we're very focused on how to make this work. There isn't any deadline, as the President said, no timetable about what to do next. We're going to -- I'm going to really try to focus and take stock of where we are and see if we can make this work.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, since your last visit to the region, there have been a flurry of visits from both sides and exchange of notes and gauging of the progress of the negotiations. Do you see an air of optimism or pessimism against the backdrop of your visit? And whether the United States will make any amendments to its

proposals?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think the first thing is to get a response to the proposal. Negotiation is a matter of negotiation, but you have to have a response first to the proposal. So if we are back at the talks, I would expect that we would have some kind of -- some kind of response.

In terms of optimism or pessimism, I don't know how to judge the prospects. I'm partly here to really get a sense of where they are. Lots of people have been having conversations with each other, with the North Koreans, the North-South talks, our talks with the Japanese, the Japanese -- or the Chinese and the South Koreans have talked. So I think it's a good time to put all of the bilateral discussions together in the -- again within more of a six-party framework to see and share information about what we've all learned now, and to see if we can move this forward. And given that there has been a lot of discussion, I would hope that we're ready to move forward.

QUESTION: Presumably, people will continue to ask about this region. But I didn't want to let your briefing conclude without asking about the London attack. What have we learned in the time that's elapsed since the attack about the way it was carried out and what that might suggest in terms of who perpetrated it?

SECRETARY RICE: James, I really don't have anything further for you. What we're trying to do is to support the British effort with law enforcement help, with intelligence help in any way that we possibly can. But I really think it's up to the British to put this all together. They're getting help not just from us but from a lot of other people as well. They obviously have plenty of their own resources. And so I think the best outcome here is to let the British focus on this investigation. I don't see where the United States is really going to help by speculating. And I think at this point, it would be nothing but speculation.

QUESTION: (Inaudible.)

SECRETARY RICE: I think we would be in the realm of speculation to say anything about who perpetrated the attacks or the nature of those attacks.

QUESTION: Back on North Korea, there's a fair bit of analysis out there that says the North Koreans really do want to come back to the talks. They've hinted around in some of their statements and in the New York channel, they're just looking for a way to save face and do that. Do you believe they want to come back? Is there anything you can do to sort of help them save face?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, remember that they asked us to come to the New York channel and we did, because we want to open every possibility, every door for the North Koreans to come back, if they will. We do believe that coming back means not just coming back and sitting at the table but actually actively trying to resolve the issues.

But again, I'm not going to try to judge their motivations. We have given opportunities for this to take place. When we've asked to be responsive to North Korean desires to speak to us, we've done that. I think you know that there was a chance meeting at the academic conference that was held. And we've also been listening to what the South Koreans have said about their discussions with the North Koreans.

So again, I think Chris Hill was out here, he's talking to the Chinese, I think, in advance of my getting here and we'll see where we are. But we have to keep opening doors to see if we can get this started again.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, I was wondering if the action in the House a week ago about the Unocal matter and then the response from the Chinese is going to impact the relationship or the discussions for North Korea as you head there right now?

SECRETARY RICE: I'll give you another question, because I'm recused on Unocal. I was a Chevron director for 10 years, so I'm recused.

As to what might affect the Chinese attitudes towards the North, towards the talks, we've always believed that the Chinese also have very strong interests in not having a nuclear Korean Peninsula, and that whatever differences we may have with China on the economic side where we've had concerns about intellectual property rights and about the currency, or certainly even concerns that we've had about the military buildup, that we still are in a position where we've had cooperative relations on the six-party talks. And I think that comes purely out of interest.

When it comes to making sure that over time we get a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula, I think that's just a very high priority for the Chinese. That's why I don't think other things will affect it.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, are you going to raise the Chinese currency issue and encourage them to float it? And also, separately on the North Korean talks, there was a report a week ago about U.S. and South Korea discussing a sweetened package of benefits for North Korea. Was that inaccurate?

SECRETARY RICE: We have not been talking about enhancement of the current proposal. I'm prepared to listen to what people think. But as I said, it's important to get a response to the proposals. But I want to give the right impression here. There's a lot of ferment, there's a lot of activity. And sometimes all of that activity comes to naught, but often all of that activity, if channeled, can produce an outcome. And I wanted to come out and give the best chance that I thought -- to try and produce an outcome.

You asked about, yes, the Chinese currency. Of course, we'll talk about the currency. But I should mention that the Joint Economic Council is going to be here the next day, Rob Portman and the people who are involved in that, and I suspect that will be much more the focus of their discussions than mine.

QUESTION: Thank you. The administration seems to have lowered the temperature in some of its language with regard to North Korea. The President even used the honorific "Mister" in front of Kim, which for whatever reason earned a positive reaction from North Korea.

In the context of allowing them a little bit of face saving space, is this something that's going to continue consciously, and do you see it as paying dividends in terms of bringing them back?

SECRETARY RICE: I think you'll find that we'll always speak truthfully about North Korea. But people know our views on those issues. The key here is that there were some important things to say. It was important to say that the -- to reiterate the President's pledge, which was given back in 2002 in South Korea that the United States had no intention of attacking or invading. It was important to state what we consider to be a statement of fact, that the United States considers North Korea a sovereign state. After all, North Korea is a member of the United Nations. North Korea, we're in negotiations with them, along with other sovereign states. So clearly, they're a sovereign state.

So I think we've been concentrating with our allies on showing that there is a way forward for the North Koreans if they choose to take it.

Thanks -- oh, one last question? Sorry.

QUESTION: This is tricky. If the North Koreans come back to the talks and sit down and they give a reaction to your proposal, are you then prepared to put new elements on the table? That's the first question. And the other question is -- and it's unclear from what you've said here -- what exactly do you -- are you going to be asking the Chinese straight out to do more? Many officials have said China can do more and should do more. And is that still your point of view?

SECRETARY RICE: We want China to do as much as it can, as others are doing. And again, I'm not going with a list of things that we want the Chinese to do. I think

there has been a lot of discussion, a lot of ferment. And the Chinese have said that they're going to have some follow up discussions with the North Koreans at a pretty high level. So I think for now, I consider this to be trying to bring together all of these strands of what's been a very active period of diplomacy over the last several months, but really especially in the last six weeks or so. And so that's really what I'm here to do.

And in terms of -- I don't think I can really answer the first of those questions. I think we have to see if we can get back to the talks. That's step one. Step two is, there's a proposal on the table, let's see if we can get a reaction to that proposal. And then obviously it's a negotiation. And so we can see what the reaction is. But right now, we're very focused on trying to bring all this activity together in a resumption of the talks with a defined purpose, the defined purpose being the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and with recognition that there is already something on the table for the North to respond to.

Thanks.

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