



Briefing on Upcoming Trip to Asia

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SECRETARY RICE: Good afternoon. The world has responded calmly and firmly to North Korea's latest efforts to subvert the attention of the international system through destructive and dangerous behavior. On Saturday, the UN Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1718. It imposed unprecedented sanctions on the Government of North Korea and it requires every nation in the world to uphold them.

Tomorrow, I leave on travel to Japan, China, the Republic of Korea and Russia. At each of these stops I will advance our diplomatic efforts to implement Resolution 1718, to address common threats to peace and stability, and to thwart the ambitions of states that illicitly seek to develop weapons of mass destruction.



The purpose of my trip is to rally the support of our friends and allies in Northeast Asia for our comprehensive strategy.

First, we must strengthen our strategic relationships in the region. As President Bush has made clear, the United States has both the will and capability to meet the full range of our security and deterrent commitments to allies like South Korea and Japan. This trip is an opportunity to reaffirm our reciprocal obligations. For the major powers of Northeast Asia, North Korea's behavior has clarified the strategic interests that we share. To advance these common interests, every country in the region must share the burdens as well as the benefits of our common security.

Second, as North Korea scorns the international community, we will collectively isolate North Korea from the benefits of participation in that community. North Korea cannot endanger the world and then expect other nations to conduct business as usual in arms or missile parts. It cannot destabilize the international system and then expect to exploit elaborate financial networks built for peaceful commerce. Resolution 1718 points the way. We expect every member of the international community to fully implement all aspects of this resolution and we expect the Security Council to aggressively monitor the process.

Third, we and our partners must expand defensive measures to counter North Korea's full array of illicit and proliferation activities. Resolution 1718 has set a new international standard, requiring states to ensure that North Korea neither imports nor exports proliferation-sensitive materials. To this end, the United States will continue to expand cooperation among nations through the Proliferation Security Initiative, and together we will work to prevent and disrupt the global traffic in weapons of mass destruction and related materials. As President Bush said last week, the transfer of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea to any state or non-state entity would be considered a grave threat to the United States and we would hold North Korea accountable for the consequences of such an action. This week, I will discuss with nations in the region how to design a practical architecture for detecting and screening for such dangerous materials.



Fourth, we must ensure the continued vitality of the global regime to prevent and counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The nonproliferation regime is under strain but it is not broken, and the United States is working to preserve and renew this vital pillar of international security. The greatest challenge to the nonproliferation regime comes from countries that violate their pledges to respect the Nonproliferation Treaty. The North Korean regime is one such case, but also so is Iran. The Iranian Government is watching and it can now see that the international community will respond to threats from nuclear proliferation. I expect the Security Council to begin work this week on an Iran sanctions resolution so the Iranian Government should consider the course that it is on, which could lead simply to further isolation.

Finally, we must remind North Korea that a positive path remains open to it through the six-party talks. Thus far, North Korea has chosen the path of confrontation and all that that entails: deepening isolation, a failing economy and few opportunities for its oppressed peoples. With Resolution 1718, the world is sending a clear message to the North Koreans that they must make a new set of calculations about the costs of the current pattern of behavior. North Korea must honor its own agreements, its 1991 joint pledge of denuclearization with South Korea and its September 2005 pledge to denuclearize in the six-party process. To those responsibilities we must now add full compliance with UN Resolution 1718. If North Korea reverses course and embraces the path of cooperation, if it makes the strategic choice to dismantle its nuclear weapons completely, verifiably and irreversibly, an entirely new and better future would be open to it and to its people.

I'll take some questions now.

QUESTION: What steps have the --

SECRETARY RICE: Barry.

QUESTION: Thank you. (Laughter.) What steps have the United States taken so far to implement the sanctions? And does South Korea's apparent uneasiness make you uneasy?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I think that we've had a very strong reaction from everybody from the day of the test of the North Koreans. We have now a very strong Chapter 7 resolution. I would remind, Barry, that it only passed a couple of days ago and so implementation has to begin. The United States of course wants very much to have discussions with all of our parties. I would notice -- would note that some countries -- Japan, Australia -- have already announced additional measures, in addition to those that are in 1718. And I suspect that you'll see more of that.

But the key now is that we have a Chapter 7 resolution, 15-0, as a matter of fact, a Council resolution meaning that all parties in effect are in sponsorship of it. It has very clear guidelines on what should and should not be allowed to get into North Korea. It has a very powerful tool in the possibility of interdiction of dangerous and suspicious cargo. It has a ban on luxury goods, which I think will be a problem for a regime that has always enjoyed luxury goods while its people -- many of them starve.

So I think we have a very powerful resolution here. I do not think that you are seeing anything but a kind of natural concern on the part of countries in the region; that we do this in a way that does not escalate tensions, that tries to deal with the conflict in a way that allows all parties to fulfill their responsibilities without escalating tensions. And no I'm not in the least concerned. I think we've got a very strong reaction not just from South Korea but from other parties as well.

Andrea.

QUESTION: More specifically on China, there was certainly a statement from Ambassador Wang after the vote saying that interdiction was not indicated, that inspection is one thing but interdiction is another. We're seeing reports today of some inspections of trucks along the border which I assume that you take as a positive sign. But do you have any understanding from the Chinese or are you seeking an understanding from the Chinese that they would be willing to interdict ships as is -- not required under this resolution but is as suggested and would be continuation of the PSI?

SECRETARY RICE: 1718 requires essentially that states make all efforts to prevent the trade in these dangerous materials. That's really what this requires. And I fully expect that everybody is going to do everything that they can to prevent it. Now, we have a powerful tool that is not unlike what we've been doing through the Proliferation Security Initiative, which requires states to cooperate. It requires states to share intelligence. It has on occasion led to either the grounding of certain aircraft or the holding of certain ships at port or the boarding of certain ships. That's how the Proliferation Security Initiative has worked.

I am a firm believer that we need to now have either some set of conversations, some set of discussions, even perhaps some mechanism for understanding better how this cooperation will work with this powerful new tool, and I can start those discussions. I am not concerned that the Chinese are going to turn their backs on their obligations. I don't think they would have voted for a resolution that they did not intend to carry through on.

And let's remember, no one has an interest in seeing the trade in dangerous materials or weapons of mass destruction. That is, if not -- if anything, more destabilizing to the neighbors than even to the interest of the United States. And so I fully expect that we will use this tool and use it wisely. I do hear states saying that they want to be certain that it won't ratchet up conflict. We have no desire to ratchet up conflict either. But we'll have some discussions on precisely how this will be carried out.

Do you want to follow up, Andrea?

QUESTION: I'd just also like to ask you how concerned you might be about some indications that there could be a second test.

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah. We're watching it obviously and discussing it with other parties as well. I think it goes to say that that would further deepen the isolation of North Korea and I hope they would not take such a provocative act. Because people went out of their way in this resolution to have a strong and firm hand and strong and firm response, but to leave open a door for North Korea to take a different course if it wishes to do so, I would hope that it would meet this firm and resolute response, but yet the openness to return to six-party talks in the way that it was intended.

Nick.

QUESTION: You talked about expanding defensive measures. In addition to the PSI or whatever the resolution requires to do, are you planning any sort of measures that would involve the American military in the region or indeed the militaries of Japan or South Korea?

SECRETARY RICE: No. We have normal discussions between the United States and Japan as a result of our defense cooperation agreements and alliance. We have relations also with South Korea in terms of defense cooperation. And clearly when there's a change in the perception or reality of the threat environment in Northeast Asia, it only makes sense that there would be discussions about how the defense cooperation and alliance obligations relate to that threat. I think it is extremely important that our allies know that we are reaffirming all of our commitments, including our deterrent commitments to them, that are longstanding and that we will fully carry through on those commitments because we recognize that the North has created a new threat environment.

Nick, I don't foresee that we're talking about, at this early stage, specific measures. But I think in the context of broad defense talks, of course, you have to take into account what has happened in the security environment.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, these sanctions, as you say, are designed to prevent the further development of North Korea's program, but what about the program as it stands now? Because if you look around the world, no country that's ever developed any nuclear capacity or tested has ever given that program up. So is the end goal here to end the program or is it to develop some kind of deterrent relationship with North Korea and what can you do in the short term to ensure that they don't test again?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, the goal is still to end the program and to do so irreversibly and verifiably. And that is the stated goal of the six-party talks, that is the stated goal of the statement -- the joint statement that was adopted in September of 2005 -- and that remains the goal. And by the way, that remains the goal of all of the parties to that agreement. And it's one of the strengths of that agreement that you have China, Japan, the United States, South Korea and Russia all signed on to that goal and to enforcing that goal. Obviously, the six-party talks would be the way to do that.

And so by no means do we consider this irreversible. There may not be cases of -- there are cases of countries having decided to give up their capability. There were three such cases after the collapse of the Soviet Union. And so I wouldn't suggest that states don't sometimes give up capacity. Libya, of course, not having tested but definitely giving up programs that would have related to the acquisition of nuclear weapons. So -- and any number of states have decided to -- South Africa, a country that decided to reverse course.

So I understand that the cases may seem somewhat different, but I think it is important to note that when countries decide that a nuclear program or a nuclear weapons development is actually contrary to their state interest and is actually not going to buy them respect and engagement in the international system but rather would buy them just the opposite, then there are states that choose to reverse course. And I think we are hopeful that North Korea may choose to do that.

Yeah, Sue.

QUESTION: The President and yourself have said that the six-party process is the preferred way to resolve the North Korean issue. Are you willing to return to those talks without preconditions at any time and are you considering attaching conditions to the resumption of those talks as you have, for example, with Iran in holding talks with them?

SECRETARY RICE: We've said many times that we are prepared to return to the talks without precondition, and that holds. Now, we want very much to have talks that are actually going to lead someplace. You know, we don't need to go back to the table and have yet another discussion about when we'll start to discuss light-water reactors. The joint statement was very clear that this is about the denuclearization, verifiably and irreversibly, of the Korean Peninsula, and I do think that it's important that talks not just be about -- just be talks; they really need to have a path forward, which the joint statement does point to, to actually beginning to affect this program. But no, we are prepared to do it without precondition.

I would say that my goal on this trip is certainly to reiterate that we are prepared to return the talks, but North Korea also needs to understand that having defied the international community twice within a few months, first with the missile test and now with a nuclear test, that they will pay a price here through Resolution 1718 and I am principally going out to talk about the implementation of 1718 and other defensive measures that might help.

James.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, there is a strain of criticism against the Administration out there which I'd like you to address and tell me why, if it's wrong, why it might

be wrong. This strain of criticism points to the President's statements back in 2003 saying that a North Korea that is a nuclear power is unacceptable and that the Administration won't tolerate it, et cetera. This strain of criticism points to the "axis of evil" speech and the strain of criticism basically alleges that you've chosen to invade Iraq and that because of the problems that the U.S. is encountering in Iraq, it is making the Administration less effective in dealing with North Korea and with Iran, the other two members of the "axis of evil".

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I think the President clearly had the diagnosis right about states that were pursuing outside of international norms troublesome policies. Iraq is in a category by itself. Let's remember we were in a suspended state of war with Iraq after 1991.

But let's go to the North Korean and Iranian cases for a moment. Had I stood here in 2003 and told you, oh, by the way, we're going to have China on board for a Chapter 7 resolution against North Korea with an agreement that China will do everything that it can on the one hand to provide a path toward denuclearization through six-party talks, taking considerable responsibility for that, but also sanctioning North Korea through the Security Council. I think people would have found that a bit of a leap given China's history, given China's traditions on these matters, given China's relationship with North Korea. We are simply in a much stronger position to try and do something about a North Korean program that is decades old and a pursuit of nuclear weapons that has gone on for decades with the right combination of states that can provide both inducements and sticks at the table than with the United States there alone. And we have spent the time and the effort in building that coalition of states that can actually provide the right combination to either induce North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons program or, if necessary, to deal with the fact that it will not give up its program and to punish that behavior. And so I think that you can say that what the President has done in putting together this coalition, with China at the center of it willing to go along with Chapter 7, is quite remarkable.

Now, the work is not done but we still consider unacceptable and not irreversible a nuclear weapons program in North Korea. But not only does the United States consider that unacceptable and not irreversible, so does China, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the rest of the international system. So let's give some time to these sanctions to work. Let's give some time to the diplomacy to work. Let's see if North Korea can be pushed in a different direction. But we've got a much stronger set of tools with which to do that.

And Iran, similarly, we also have a coalition of states that is working for a change in Iranian behavior concerning their nuclear program, much stronger position for the United States to be in than it was just a little while ago when it was thought that the United States was the problem in considering Iran. Now Iran is the problem. So the President has put together these coalitions. It's the right way to go about this activity and it is the only way to use a diplomatic solution to resolve these cases.

I'll take --

QUESTION: The problem in -- the problems in Iraq are not affecting our ability to handle these others?

SECRETARY RICE: We can certainly do more than one thing at a time. And I think what you're seeing is that in fact the international community understands that the proliferation risk and the proliferation dangers are dangerous to them not just to the United States and so we're getting very good cooperation.

Last one, Barbara.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, these sanctions are not directed against the North Korean people --

SECRETARY RICE: Right.

QUESTION: -- but are you concerned that as a result of the crisis the humanitarian situation is going to become dramatically worse? Already World Food Program is not getting the donations that it needs for its -- its scaled back program.

And also if you could comment on South Korea's reluctance to suspend Kaesong or Kumgang Mountain projects, whether you're disappointed that you're allowing those to go forward.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we will see what the South Koreans decide to do about their activities in general with North Korea. I suspect that a lot of it has to do with what North Korea does and the South's been very clear that it is evaluating all of its activities with North Korea and we will see where this comes out.

The humanitarian side on the other hand, we would hope that there will be humanitarian contributions to the North Korean people. You may know that the United States has recently not been making those contributions and it's not because of politics. It's not because we're wanting to use food as a weapon, which is something the President has said very clearly he will not do, but because the North Koreans have not agreed to the kind of transparency in their programs that can -- by any means -- guarantee that the food will get to the North Korean people not to the North Korean elites.

And I think that's why there is difficulty in getting contributions for humanitarian assistance. It's not related to trying to use humanitarian assistance as a stick against North Korean people. And these people suffer enough and we don't want to see the North Korean people suffer any more. But the best outcome would be if the North Korean regime recognized that there is a better way than the course on which it is currently launched, and that as a part of that there could be an opening up to the North Korean people and beginning to deal with some of the very dire needs that they have not for just short-term humanitarian assistance but for longer term care.

Thank you very much. See you tomorrow.

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 [BACK TO TOP](#)

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