



## The Current State of North Korea and the Future of the U.S.-Korea Alliance

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**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Thank you very much. That lunch looks very good. But I'll think about that later. (Laughter.)

But thank you very much for mentioning -- going back to those bright days of Kosovo. I must say I look back at that with a certain amount of nostalgia given what has been going on here.

First of all, let me congratulate Woodrow Wilson School for having this International Agenda series, together with Foreign Policy magazine and, I gather, also co-sponsored by the National Press Club. I think it's a terrific series and I'm very honored to be a part of it.

I would like to talk about the U.S. relationship on the Korean Peninsula. It's a very mixed relationship. Half of it is going very, very well, and the other half not so well. So I thought I'd talk about the good part and then we'll get to the Northern part after that.

But let me say, first of all, that I know there has been a lot said, a lot written, a lot thought about the U.S. relationship with the Republic of Korea in recent years because it's a relationship that has truly undergone some profound changes. And I think as we look ahead to or as we have just passed the 50 -- really, 50-year milestone of this relationship, I think we're looking ahead to the next 50 years, and I know there's a lot of interest in whether we can make this relationship in the next 50 years what it has been in the first 50 years. And I would say the early returns on that are, in fact, very positive. I would say the U.S.-Korean relationship is in indeed very good shape.

This morning I just had the -- really, the honor of meeting with Ban Ki-moon, Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon, on what I think will be a very important day for him. And I think the fact that one of Korea's own distinguished statesmen is now before the UN General Assembly to seek approval as the new Secretary General I think speaks volumes of how far Korea has come. After all, the Republic of Korea was a great beneficiary of the United Nations in the past, and now to see the Republic of Korea giving back to the United Nations in the form of this very distinguished statesman for consideration as the next Secretary General, I think it really shows how far Korea has come and really, in many respects, validates the view of so many Americans who have stood by Korea for so many years. We are very, very pleased to see what Korea has accomplished, very pleased to see the economic -- the truly extraordinary economic progress in Korea.

And I think today we really feel we have no better ally in the world than we do with the Republic of Korea. Just a few weeks ago, President Roh, President Roh Moo-hyun, was in the White House, and I think the nature of the discussion with President Bush really, I think, confirmed that we are moving this relationship to a new and even higher plane.

We are discussing what we can do to, first of all, get Korea on the Visa Waiver Program because we would like a situation where, you know, when someone in Korea wants to come to visit the U.S. and have the opportunity to do some business or to buy something or to play golf or whatever, they ought to be able to just get on an airplane. And so we're working very hard to get that Visa Waiver Program done for Korea.

There are some 1.5 million Korean Americans now living in the U.S. We have about 700,000 Korean visitors to the U.S. a year. In fact, there are 86,000 Korean students in the U.S.; and alongside with China and India, who have somewhat larger populations than Korea, I think it really shows a couple of things. First of all, it shows Korea's continued thirst for education, something that's inspiring to all of us, especially parents of teenage children; but also it shows very much the fact that Koreans feel they can be welcomed and be a part of the U.S. educational system, so we're very pleased about that.

The economic relationship is also truly very, very strong. Korea, of course, is now the 11th largest economy in the world, or 10th largest depending on whose statistics you believe. It is the U.S. seventh largest trading partner. We have bilateral trade of some \$72 billion a year, and I think very importantly this year we are engaged in a free trade agreement negotiation which we believe could be very beneficial both to the United States and to Korea.

Any time you discuss free trade agreement negotiations, you're into a very tough negotiations, comparable really to those nuclear negotiations going on in the other part of Korea. But I think we will figure out how we can get through that and we will look to see if we can get this done before the fast track trade authority expires next spring.

So I think there's a lot to be very pleased about there. And I think if we can get through this FTA, not only will the U.S. economy be stronger, but I think very much for Koreans who are now looking around and the rest of Asia and seeing a considerable amount of competition, economic competition, I think for Koreans they will also see that this is very much in their interest.

In terms of our military relationship, it remains very strong and -- but it also is changing. I think it's important to understand that the military relationship does not refer directly to the alliance. The alliance is very much the bedrock of our relationship. The fact that the United States is treaty-bound to protect the Republic of Korea against any attack by any foe, that relationship is absolutely solid and does not change.

What does change, of course, is what kind of troops we have, what kind of forces we have, what we have there to make sure that any potential aggressor understands that to attack the Republic of Korea really is to attack the United States itself; that is, we remain treaty-bound to protect the Korean -- the Republic of Korea and its territory.

We have undergone changes, certainly in terms of our ground forces. From 2004 to 2008, we're looking at a reduction from about 37,500 troops down to about 25,000, doing this in some three phases. We're working with the Republic of Korea to develop some new operational control arrangements, operational control that will give Korean commanders a much greater role in the event of an emergency. We will work this out, we'll work it out in military channels, and we'll work it out to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Moreover, we have been working to restructure our military installations in Korea to return two-thirds of the land we have used for our troops, to return them to the Korean people. Many of these areas -- anyone who's been to some of these U.S. bases in Korea knows that 40 or 50 years ago these bases stood in the middle of rural lands, and now they often stand in the middle of 25-story apartment buildings. So it is time to look at ways to reconfigure and we're doing that.

We work with the Korean military in many different places. Korea has provided support in operations in Afghanistan, in Africa, in East Timor. Korea, the Republic of Korea, remains the third largest presence in the international coalition in Iraq, contributing significantly to reconstruction and development in that country.

I would say Korea has really become a global player in many respects. And when Korea -- when issues in the world are looked at, whether they're in Africa or in the Middle East, the world's 10th or 11th largest industrial country needs to play a role in those.

Korea is also in the -- I've mentioned Ban Ki-moon's ascendancy as the prime candidate to become the new Secretary General in the UN, but also Korea is an important partner in international financial institutions. It's been involved very directly in disaster relief efforts such as the tsunami. It was one of the first countries -- one of the first countries -- to offer the United States assistance in the -- following the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

So I think our relationship with Korea is not bad. And for people who, you know, worry about it, I think they should understand that things to worry about are things that are part of the success of this relationship. We look forward to our dialogue with the Republic of Korea. We don't expect to agree on everything at every time, but we look forward to exchanging views. And in fact, that process will very much continue when Secretary Rice goes to the region next week.

Secretary Rice is planning a trip next week, which was just announced, I think, minutes ago at the State Department -- by the State Department press spokesman. She'll be visiting Tokyo, Seoul and Beijing.

And I think it's an important -- it's a very important visit. Indeed, I'll be going out probably just a little in advance of that and I'll be taking part in those discussions. It's a particularly important time, because I think in the last week especially, the Republic of Korea and the U.S. have really faced one of the greatest challenges we've faced really since the 1950s. It's not a challenge necessarily between us because I think we've seen in the last few days how much unanimity, how much, I would say, mutual agreement there has been between the Republic of Korea and the U.S. on what to do with this challenge.

But we do need to find a solution to it. We do need to get through this and find a way to make sure that the DPRK, which is now boasting of having tested a nuclear weapon, understands that this is a fundamental decision, a fundamental mistake that they've made, and a mistake that, frankly, nobody is prepared to live with.

So we will work together with Korea in the coming days, just as we will our other partners in the region, especially our other ally in the region; that is, Japan. And we will look to make clear that we're going to stay together, that we will speak with one voice, that we will convince North Korea that it must -- it must -- follow a different path.

North Korea really has -- North Korea's nuclear test, whatever the strength, whatever the technical success or lack of success, was indeed a very provocative act that all the nations of the world have condemned. It's a threat to international peace and security and it's an effort by North Korea to defy the will of the international community, and perhaps more fundamentally to test the will of the international community. I think it's very important that the U.S., that the Republic of Korea, that Japan, China and every other country, every other serious country in the world, speak very clearly about this danger.

Today, as I speak to you, there are -- the negotiations in the UN Security Council are continuing. There has been a lot of progress in the Security Council resolution in the last few days. I will leave it to Ambassador Bolton to say -- to speak for the U.S. Government on where we are, except to say that I think there has been a great deal of progress.

Yesterday, the State Councilor of China Tang Jiaxuan came to Washington and spoke with Dr. Rice and with Mr. Hadley and also with President Bush and made very clear where China is. And we were very pleased to see that the U.S. and the China relationship has really, I think, come closer together as a result of this terrible provocation by the North Koreans.

So the first issue we need to do is to address -- is to make clear that the sense of outrage and condemnation by the international community to have a resolution in the Security Council which will not only be a resolution condemning North Korea but actually a resolution with some teeth to it. North Korea needs to understand that this is indeed a very, very costly decision that will leave North Korea far worse off and far more isolated than ever before. We need to make very -- make that -- give that message very clearly and make sure that North Korea cannot find any differences in our views. So I think so far, so good. I think we're very much doing that.

But I think looking ahead we also need to continue to work together, first of all, to make clear to our partners and allies that nobody need to -- needs to consider their own nuclear arsenal, that we will -- the United States remains treaty-bound, morally bound, to provide for the security of other countries, of our allies, and so no country needs to consider making a decision in the direction of considering a nuclear option.

But I think looking beyond that we need to deal with one of the most worrisome problems. It's the fact that North Korea has so many times, so many times engaged in the trade of various illicit items, including missile technology, and we would not want to see them engage in the trade of nuclear technology. There's been a lot of discussion about the illicit activities; for example, the fact that North Korea has been essentially caught engaged in counterfeiting of U.S. dollars, caught engaged in having its diplomats market various products that would keep its various embassies in operation -- that is, earning money through illicit sales of various items smuggled in through a diplomatic pouch in the case of -- in the famous case a few years ago in Scandinavia.

And there's been discussion about how -- why do we focus on those things when in fact North Korea has been engaged in -- is engaging in nuclear technology; why don't we forget about those things and focus on the nuclear issues.

But I would urge people to understand that this is all part and parcel of the same behavior. When you let them get away with counterfeiting someone else's currency -- in this case our currency -- you are essentially saying that North Korea can have rules that are different for North Korea from the rest of the world. And I think what North Korea needs to understand is, if they do harbor a desire to join the international community, they better understand that there are rules, and rules that will apply to them as well as to all the other member states.

So it is quite right and is, I think, quite understandable that we and other countries should be very concerned about all of these aspects of their behavior and should take steps to deal with them. And so we will be looking, with our partners, pursuant to this Security Council resolution as well as the resolution that was passed in July which followed the North Korean missile test, we'll be looking for ways to strengthen our ability to prevent North Korea from engaging in the sale and purchase of illicit items. We'll be looking for ways to increase our cooperation with other countries and to make it clear to North Korea that it's going to have to figure out another way to earn its living besides this type of activity.

So I think we will work very closely with all the countries in the region and we will work very closely with the financial system, with the world financial system, to make sure that North Korea, which has been unwilling to accept rules that every other sovereign state accepts, that they need to understand that they cannot get away with this type of behavior.

The North Korean regime, unfortunately, depends on the notion that somehow it is being threatened and that somehow these are, for North Korea, defensive measures. For example, one of their justifications for having a nuclear test was that they have not gotten back their \$24 million in a Macau-based bank. Well, their \$24 million has been frozen by the Macau authorities pending the outcome of the investigation of this bank called Banco Delta Asia. But I will leave it to you to tell me whether waiting on your \$24 million justifies a nuclear weapons program.

In short, I don't think the North Koreans are serious about that excuse. I don't think they were serious about the excuse that their feelings were so hurt at being called a member of the "axis of evil," that their feelings were so hurt at being referred to an outpost of tyranny that they engaged in a nuclear weapons program.

I think whenever diplomatic efforts bog down -- and I must admit I'm part of that process of having been bogged down -- there is an effort at times to sort of look at yourself and say, "Have you done everything you can do?" And in fact, while you start examining your own actions, there's often a tendency to say, "Well, maybe we could have done something differently. Maybe we could have given them their \$24 million, and then they would have stopped the development of this 30-year-old nuclear program. Maybe if we hadn't referred to them as a 'outpost of tyranny,' that somehow they would -- somehow their feelings would be less injured and they would not

engage in nuclear programs."

But I think, realistically speaking, we need to understand that these nuclear programs really derive from the nature of the North Korean state itself, a state that does not play by rules, a state that -- by anyone else's rules; only its own -- a state that really feeds on its own propaganda of paranoia. And I think now is the time, really, to be very firm -- to be calm but firm and to make clear to the North Koreans that no one is going to accept them as a nuclear weapon state, that we're not going to live with them as a nuclear weapon state, that they're going to have to get themselves out of this category and join in the world and choose another path.

That path, by the way, is very open. It's a very clear choice. One path leads in the direction, I think, of further isolation and ultimately, I think, a country that will not have a future, because I don't think they can feed on this type of paranoia forever. I don't think they can develop these weapons and ever use them in any way that will protect them for the future. So I think one path really leads to no future at all.

The other path leads in quite another direction. We worked very hard -- it seems like a hundred years ago, but it was actually only about 13 months ago -- we worked very hard in Beijing to come up with a joint statement. And if you look at that joint statement -- it is a sparsely written, two and a half page joint statement -- you can see an entire future laid out for North Korea. And I would say if you read carefully, you will see an entire future not only for North Korea but for the Korean peninsula, too. Because it is not just the North Korean people that have suffered at the hands of this government in North Korea, it's not just the people in North Korea whose diet is inadequate who have suffered so terribly, it's also people in South Korea who have suffered so much.

There have been some 480 South Koreans who were abducted by the North Koreans over the years, many without a trace today -- many South Koreans now approaching 70, 80, even 90 years old never having seen their relatives because they are on the wrong side of the DMZ. It has been a very, very miserable existence for people from South Korea as well to look north and see what has happened, this terrible scar on their peninsula now made worse by this explosion of a -- or this nuclear test.

So, I think what we need -- what we tried to do in this joint statement was to lay out a future not only for North Korea, but for the Korean Peninsula, too, and to deal with the need to find a peace mechanism. We also look for a future that goes beyond the Korean Peninsula and to embrace the issues of Northeast Asia. Those people who are -- those of you who are familiar with Europe know what Europe has accomplished since 1945; extraordinary progress, and done with various multilateral institutions. And when you look at Northeast Asia, you see a dearth of these institutions. And so we have in mind from that joint statement, developed on -- finalized on September 19th, that we can move beyond just the peace in the Korean Peninsula, but also toward creating some multilateral structures that will allow Northeast Asia not only to be the economic juggernaut that Northeast Asia is, not only to be exporting the various wonderful products -- such as cell phones that they have -- (laughter) -- but also Northeast Asia that can also be exporting peace and a sense of how to get along.

So people often ask me if I'm optimistic or pessimistic. First of all, anyone who has a tendency to pessimism should not be in this line of work, I'll tell them right now. (Laughter.) But I think when you look at the logic of what we're trying to do, and the overwhelming support for that logic that you see throughout the region, and especially in the Republic of Korea, you can see that it is worth sticking with, it is worth trying to get that joint statement through, and I, for one, will continue to do that.

So, with those introductory comments, we can go to some questions. (Applause.)

**MODERATOR:** Ambassador Hill has to keep a very tight schedule, so we have time for some questions. And we have microphones set up on the side of the room. So if you have a question, please make your way over to the side of the room and we can begin right away.

**QUESTION:** Ambassador Hill, the U.S. had to make some concessions in order to get the resolution agreed to that they're going to vote on tomorrow, including limiting it to Article 41 of Chapter 7. What is going to be different about this resolution that is going to have an impact on Kim Jong-il, say that the resolution passed in July -- comparing it to the resolution passed in July?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, look, I really don't want to speak to the resolution at this point.

It's not final. It's not yet approved. It's -- there are still some negotiations going on. I'm very confident it will be approved, but it still hasn't been finalized. And I think when it is -- and we would hope it'll be finalized very soon -- I'd be happy to discuss it, but I would say -- I would just say as a general proposition, that this is a resolution that is very strong, very explicitly Chapter 7 and a resolution that will, I think, make abundantly clear to the North Koreans that this decision to have a nuclear test was a very bad decision indeed. But beyond that, I really don't want to speak to the particulars on it because the negotiations are still going on.

**MODERATOR:** Right over here.

**QUESTION:** Mike Lavalley, Tokyo Broadcasting System. Everyone agrees that there has to be an initial phase of sanctions and U.N. Security Council resolution, and -- but it seems like most people agree also, after that there has to be some diplomatic off-ramp, some way to get this process going again.

I was wondering, since North Korea has decided over a year now not to come back to the talks, and the September agreement doesn't seem to be particularly attractive to them, is there anything that you are considering to get this process going again once this initial phase is over? Is there any incentives? And if not, why do you think -- seeing that North Korea is not afraid of being isolated, why do you think they will be induced to come back without any further incentives?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Okay. First of all, the September 19th statement was agreed by the North Koreans. So when you say it wasn't of any interest to them, they agreed to it. They explicitly agreed to it. They took some time to get, you know, clearance from, you know, Pyongyang. It wasn't just agreed ad referendum, and then, low and behold they took it back home and people back home said, "What have you done?" I mean, it was agreed.

So to be sure, for those of us who really wanted to get on with implementing it, because right now it's a piece of paper, it's been very -- it's been a long 13 months, and I agree with you. But you know, if you go back in diplomatic history, 13 months is not an unprecedented time. I think people don't understand enough the degree to which North Korea has been engaged in some of these activities and how long they've been engaged. This nuclear program did not start two years ago or three years ago. Best estimates are that it started at some point in -- even in the early '70s. So to turn away from this nuclear program, I think, involves for them a shift of 30 years of policy; 30 years, I might add, of really wrong-headed policy, but 30 years of policy. So it's not an easy thing to get done.

I agree with you that to some extent the North Koreans have thrived on a sense of isolation, except for certain goods they like to see come into North Korea for certain people. But I would argue that whereas North Korea's -- whereas this policy of isolation, which is so patently unsuccessful for them now -- in the views of many of them, it was successful for quite a while. I mean, if you look statistically, North Korea was very much on a par with the Republic of Korea until even into the late '60s. Even in the 1970s, North Korea was ahead of China. So really, in -- it's only been in the last, you know, maybe 25 years that this has been proved to be a colossal mistake. I would say the infrastructure in North Korea, the conditions of the factories, the ability to provide, you know, electricity -- things like that -- have been really deteriorating in recent years.

You know, one of the questions you ask is -- or can be asked is well, why don't they get some different people in there? And it's not only that they have trouble choosing their leaders, they have trouble choosing their bureaucrats. You will see people stay in jobs for some 10, 15 years -- very same people. They have a sort of civil service rotation system, but it doesn't ever seem to be used. So not only do they have trouble coming up with fresh ideas, they have trouble coming up with fresh people themselves. I cannot imagine doing my job for 15 years. (Laughter.) It's a frightening thought. I mean -- so I think it really shows you that the whole system is just calcified; it has trouble moving, trouble breathing, really.

So I think we need to do as I've outlined and understand that we really are dealing with a very tough situation. Change -- you know, you never know when it comes. It can

come very quickly, I mean, it can come remarkably quickly. And there are a lot of people who worry about that in the region. But it can also come at times when you just don't expect it. So there are a lot of people who call themselves "North Korean experts." I'd be careful of that sort of person. (Laughter.) I would rather be a little -- I think be very respectful of all the things we don't know about that society rather than too sure of the few things that we do know.

**MODERATOR:** Right over here.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Hill, Mahmoud Hamalawi (ph) with Al-Jazeera channel. You talked about the need for a resolution to be very strong. At the same time, are you concerned -- and if you can tell me about your cooperation with China -- are you concerned that this resolution may have an adverse effect on China's security or South Korea's security at the same time?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I don't think it has an adverse effect on China's security or South Korea's security. First of all, China wouldn't support it if they felt they did. And we have had lengthy discussions with China on the issue of the resolution. And to be sure, there are some issues we still have to work through, which is why I don't really want to comment on the issue -- on the resolution right now, but I think it's a pretty good resolution. The Chinese made very clear that they want a resolution that will really be not only a signal to the North Korean regime but also would actually be painful to the North Korean regime.

Of course, you know, people -- there's people who argue, "Well, if you're hurting them, won't you just drive them further into their shell?" Well, maybe in the beginning, but maybe they will -- ultimately they will begin to look at it more clearly.

So I think we need to -- as I said earlier, we need to work together, make sure there's no daylight between us. And, you know, for people who follow the U.S. relationship with China, what we are doing with China today with respect to a neighbor of China is unprecedented. So perhaps someday in the history books Kim Jong-il will get a lot of credit for bringing the U.S. and China closer together. (Laughter.)

**MODERATOR:** Next question.

**QUESTION:** Christoph Marshall from the German daily Der Tagesspiegel. It's a few years since we have seen each other on the Balkans, but that's not a bad reason for Europeans that we don't need you there anymore. (Laughter.) And I think we are happy about that.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** (Inaudible) the Balkans. I mean, don't get me going on that, because I see Roberts Owen over there and so I already get very nostalgic about it, so -- good to see you, Bob.

**QUESTION:** Well, in a few hours from now there will be starting new sanctions for the beginning -- trade sanctions from the South and Japan. You are confident that the U.N. will have additional sanctions. But the North Koreans said they regard this as a sort of act of war, and they said there will be grave consequences from their side.

What do you expect to happen? Is this just talk? Do you take it serious? And if you take it serious, what precautions have been taken in case they really react in the way?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, I can assure you we have -- we have a very strong alliance with Japan, with the Republic of Korea. We have forces in the area. We -- I can assure you we can deal with these sorts of belligerent threats.

I would also point out, though, that just because the North Koreans make these blood-curdling threats isn't a reason to back down in the face of them; it's a reason to be prepared, to be clear-eyed, to be ready, and we are. North Korea has a terrible habit of making a lot of threats. They make threats every day of the week, including on Sundays.

And, you know, there are probably a million reasons they should not have nuclear weapons, but one of those million reasons should be the fact that they are always threatening people with various things. And in fact, I think it -- within days of the nuclear test, they were threatening other countries with nuclear weapons. So I think it's kind of the nature of how they deal with people, and, frankly, that really has got to stop.

**MODERATOR:** Right over here --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Howard LaFranchi with the Christian Science Monitor. I'll try to ask a resolution-related question without asking you to comment on the resolution. But --

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** -- let's see if I can do it. No, but as we know, the resolution that -- the U.S. has had to soften the resolution to get it approved, and some of that weakening has been in areas that the U.S. said is a priority, which is stop the trade in materials that you were talking about earlier. So I'm wondering if on this trip this week if Secretary Rice -- and you're going as well -- if you will be pressing with those you'll be meeting with for some of those items that had to be taken out of the resolution, for acting in concert on some of that and if you could elaborate a little bit on the purpose on the trip.

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Okay. I see you were trying to make the question so complicated that I'll stumble into commenting on the resolution. (Laughter.)

Look, on the resolution, let me just say, we have John Bolton up there negotiating it. You know, we're not going to be, you know, taking some position that we can't live with. You know, really, I -- don't worry about that. (Laughter.)

I think a -- obviously, we'll do some additional -- or have some additional briefings on Secretary Rice's trip. But I think a key part of her trip will be to make sure that the resolution, when passed, will really have teeth to it and will really function properly.

And we are in considerable, extensive discussion already with partners in anticipation of how the -- of the resolution, and I think we will do more of that. And I think it will be -- you know, everyone believes in the importance of preventing North Korea from gaining the financing and the technology for further such programs. And we will be looking to do all we can to make sure that the systems that are set up pursuant to the resolution as well as systems that we already have in place, such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, are workable in this instance, and perhaps we should look ahead to make sure they're workable in other proliferation cases. Because what North Korea has not only done is they've -- they have defied the international community, but they've also defied a very important thing that the international community has been engaged in, and that is the nonproliferation or counterproliferation.

So I think we need to make sure that we have devised something that works, and I think we need to make sure it works for North Korea, but I think we need to look ahead to other examples as well.

So I think this is a real -- North Korea has posed a real challenge to us, but I think we've responded by unprecedented unanimity. I think all of the countries in the region -- and it's so important to have China a part of that because, you know, all political or even proliferation questions should start with a look at the map, and you see the importance of China. So I'm fairly confident we can work on that, and to be sure, the trip to Northeast Asia will have that issue front and center.

**MODERATOR:** We have time for just two more questions. Right here.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Elise Labott with CNN. Ambassador Hill, you've said in the past and the President has said that you're not willing to accept and live with a nuclear North Korea. While you may not be willing to live with it, aren't you in fact dealing with one right now? A lot of the punitive measures that you're putting in place will take admittedly a while for North Korea to feel the effects and are dealing with a further proliferation or further development of the program. But what about the program that you're dealing with right now? With the unpredictability of the regime, they could test again at any minute. And so as you move ahead on these punitive measures, shouldn't there be a stronger effort on deterrence as well dealing with North Korea as a semi -- at least -- nuclear power right now?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I don't -- semi-nuclear sounds like semi-pregnant. I don't --

**QUESTION:** Well, are they in fact a nuclear power right now though?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** I think -- I'm not sure I have much to add on that point. We're not going to live with a North Korea that's a nuclear power. It's not -- if the plan by North Korea is to emulate past experiences where a country explodes a nuclear weapon, announces its membership in the club and is a member of the nuclear club, we're not going to accept it. Now, how we don't accept it is going to be a combination of a lot of things.

I think diplomacy has to play a role in that, but I think also these -- what we've just been discussing: ways to prevent them from getting the technology, ways to prevent them from getting the financing. I think that is a key part of this. And ultimately, I have to believe in the logic that these nuclear weapons will leave North Korea more impoverished and less secure than ever before. And ultimately, I think -- and I cannot give you a timeframe for ultimately -- we can arrive at a situation where they get out of this business.

**QUESTION:** I'm sorry, if I can just do a very quick follow-up. In the short term, though, how do you deal with the reality that North Korea has nuclear weapons, and you've admittedly said yourself that it is a very unpredictable regime, if they feel that they have nothing to lose right now, what's to stop them from going for broke with these weapons?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, again, we are dealing with this in the short term by, first of all, we've worked very hard to get this resolution; we expect it very shortly. We're in touch with our friends and allies. We are dealing with this in a variety of ways in the short term, but we're also going to deal with the issue of getting them off this path. So I can't answer it much more specifically than that at this point.

**MODERATOR:** Last question.

**QUESTION:** Sakamoto (ph), Yomiuri Shimbun, Japanese newspaper. So now that the North Koreans declare that they have tested nuclear devices and international community is going to impose sanctions with teeth on them, is it fair to say the tension in the region, especially in the military terms, will be heightened, at least for the time being? And what kind of messages is Secretary Rice going to bring to Japan, South Korea and China?

**AMBASSADOR HILL:** Well, again, you know, I'm not ready to brief yet on the Secretary's trip. It was just announced about, I think, three minutes before I walked in this room. But there will be an opportunity to talk about it. And of course she will be going to Tokyo, and I believe Tokyo first she'll be going.

So, to be sure, any time a country sets off a nuclear test in a region, there's no question there's heightened anxiety, heightened tensions. I would not say that this -- whatever this nuclear test was means that North Korea kind of has it miniaturized and sitting on a missile and ready to threaten another country with. So I don't want to exaggerate in any way the immediate military threat that this presents. But to be sure, there's a lot of concern in the region, as there should be. And I think one of the things we want to do when Secretary Rice goes to the region is make very clear the U.S. is very much engaged and as close as never before to our allies in the region -- that is Japan and the Republic of Korea -- but also working in an unprecedentedly close way with China.

So, I don't have an answer for you that we could solve this in an immediate sense. But I can assure you we are dealing with this on several levels, on several fronts, and I can assure you we're working as hard as we can because we're just not going to sit around and somehow accept that North Korea should become a nuclear state, and then walk away from the problem. We're going to be engaged on it till we solve it.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

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