



Remarks With Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso After Their Meeting

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Tokyo, Japan
October 18, 2006

FOREIGN MINISTER ASO: (*Via interpreter.*) Earlier, I had a very good meeting with Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. As you know, on the 14th, a UN Security Council resolution was adopted and the world community is united in working to resolve the issues related to North Korea.

The fact that Secretary Rice is visiting Japan, I believe attests to the solid alliance between -- or the solid relationship between Japan and the United States. The Japan-U.S. security system is central for the peace and stability of Japan and this region. And to make this Japan-U.S. alliance system more effective, I believe it is important for Japan and the United States to cooperate with each other.

I confirmed with Secretary Rice that the U.S. commitment to providing deterrence under the Japan-U.S. security system will be maintained under (inaudible), that is to say the U.S. commitment to defend Japan under the Japan-U.S. security system will be maintained under any circumstances.

On the North Korean issue, we agreed that Japan and the United States should act in coordination to expeditiously implement the measures the UN Security Council resolution calls for and together work on countries concerned. To that end, we agreed that Japan and the United States will continue to cooperate, including exchanging information closely between us.

We intended to keep the door open for dialogue with North Korea at all times while applying effective pressure. Together with Secretary Rice, I call on North Korea to exercise maximum self-restraint and refrain from any act that aggravates the situation. And I also call on North Korea to return to the six-party talks immediately without precondition.

Through these efforts, we agreed that we shall maintain in close coordination with each other to arrive at comprehensive resolution of the North Korean nuclear, missile and abduction issues.

After discussions centering on the nuclear test issue, we also exchanged views on our bilateral relations, the regional situation, including China and the Republic of Korea, as well as the Middle East situation, including Iran, from the perspective of nuclear nonproliferation. Through these talks, we affirmed the solid alliance between our two countries.

Secretary Rice will visit Seoul tomorrow. I also will go to Seoul for a Japan-U.S.-South Korea foreign ministers meeting. I expect that we will confirm in a clear-cut manner that Japan and U.S. will maintain coordination with the ROK in addressing the North Korean issue.

Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, Minister Aso, for the welcome here and for our excellent discussions. We are of course longstanding and very strong allies, and we have of course reaffirmed our commitments to one another and our commitments to this region.

We have discussed the security situation in the region in light of the North Korean nuclear test, and earlier the North Korean missile test. The United Nations Security Council has acted firmly and resolutely in both cases to say to the North Koreans that their behavior is unacceptable and that it is in fact isolating North Korea from the international community. And the Foreign Minister and I pledged that we will work together and with other states for the swift implementation and the effective implementation of all of the measures that are contemplated under Resolution 1718.

We also talked about the importance of our defense alliance at this critical time, and I reaffirmed to Foreign Minister Aso, and will in fact reaffirm again to Prime Minister Abe, the firm commitment of the United States to the defense of Japan in accordance with all of our security arrangements and commitments, including the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1960.

I reaffirmed the President's statement of October 9th that the United States has the will and the capability to meet the full range -- and I underscore full range -- of its deterrent and security commitments to Japan.

President Bush has also said and made clear that North Korea will be held accountable should it transfer nuclear materials or weapons to other states or to non-state actors.

This is an especially important time for allies to work together. Our alliance is one of the most important pillars of peace and stability in this region, and it is stronger than ever and everyone should know that.

We also had an opportunity to talk about the diplomacy that is going on in the region. I congratulated Foreign Minister Aso and will congratulate Prime Minister Abe on his successful trips to China and to South Korea. We look forward to our discussions tomorrow with our South Korean colleague, and then I will go on in the region to talk about this important time in the region.

As the Foreign Minister said, we had a chance to talk about a few other bilateral issues. If I might just highlight that of course the UN Security Council is now also taking up the matter of Iran and we expect that there will be action in the Security Council there as well because the nonproliferation regime will only work if the international community remains absolutely determined to enforce its provisions.

And so thank you very much, Foreign Minister Aso. Thank you for receiving me on rather short notice, but I think at times like these it's important for allies to get together. Thank you.

MODERATOR: We would like to entertain questions from the press now. First, Japanese press, please. Anyone, a question? Please, Abe-san (ph).

QUESTION: I'm Abe (ph) with Asahi-Shimbun. In your meeting today, as both of you have said, you talked about or you confirmed expeditious action on sanctions.



Specifically with regard to cargo inspection of vessels that arrive or leave North Korea, I wonder if there were any specific requests from the U.S. to Japan. If there were no specifics discussed, when will be the timing of implementation, scale and methods of implementing the cargo inspections?

FOREIGN MINISTER ASO: With regard to the current North Korean issue, when discussing that issue, including the cargo inspection, we did agree that steady implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1718 would be very important. On this question of cargo inspection, there are various points that need to be finalized and worked out at the working level, so there will be consultations at the working level that will work on details.

SECRETARY RICE: We'll begin those working consultations this evening.

The resolution was passed very quickly, in record time for the United Nations, and so it's not surprising that there are a number of details to be worked out. But I'd just like to make a couple of points clear.

First of all, the United States has no desire to escalate this crisis. In fact, we would like to see it de-escalate. And Resolution 1718's principal aim is to do two things.

First of all, to deal with the potential effects of North Korea trying to transfer materials or to obtain materials. That's why there is an embargo as there is also an embargo on certain kinds of arms. And it's the obligation of states under 1718 to make certain to use the tools that they have that that is not -- that transfer is not happening.

That can be done in many different ways. We are talking about some of the detection opportunities, detection equipment that we have through container security initiative that we have instituted, a mega-ports initiative with which we might be able to detect dangerous materials.

It is also the case that under authorities that are available to various governments and international law, then efforts to make sure that materials are not being transferred should be made. But we want very much this to be done in a way that is steady, effective and brings close scrutiny to North Korean transfers. But this is not an embargo. This is not a quarantine. And -- sorry, a blockade or quarantine. And so we want to work out the details. We'll talk about it here. We'll also talk about it in other places.

MODERATOR: Anne Gearan, Associated Press.

QUESTION: Mr. Foreign Minister, does the North Korean nuclear test make it more likely that Japan will rethink or reorder its conventional defensive capabilities, and should it open a debate in Japan about a domestic nuclear program?

And for Secretary Rice, would the United States welcome such a debate in Japan over a domestic nuclear program?

FOREIGN MINISTER ASO: In our talks just a moment ago -- well, it is true that if a neighbor goes nuclear, Japan inevitably will go nuclear. That isn't the sort of thing that has been talked about for some time, especially by the foreign press. But as far as Japan is concerned, we, the Government of Japan, has no position at all to consider going nuclear. There is no need to arm ourselves with nuclear weapons either. For Japan's own defense we have this Mutual Defense Treaty with United States and we have the commitment, and that commitment has been reconfirmed by Secretary Rice, that there is this commitment to make sure that the security system will work.

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, I just would underscore what the Foreign Minister said. Japan has answered this question. The Prime Minister has answered the question. The Foreign Minister has answered the question. The role of the United States is to make certain that everybody, including the North Koreans, know very well that the United States will fully recognize and act upon its obligations under the Mutual Defense Treaty and in defense of our Japanese ally. And I've reconfirmed that that is the American view and the American position.

MODERATOR: Thank you very much. That concludes the press conference. Thank you.
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