



Press Conference at U.S. Embassy, Beijing, China

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ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Nice to see you all. Where do I begin? Late last week the Chinese government, through Ambassador Randt here at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, contacted Secretary Rice and asked if we could participate in a three-way meeting at the level of head of six-party delegations here in Beijing today. The purpose of the meeting was to try to restart the six-party process. I was traveling at the time. I was attending the Pacific Island Forum. And I had some meetings in Australia.

Yesterday I came up from Australia and arrived here in Beijing last night. And today we had meetings out at the Diaoyutai complex. We met with the Chinese and with the North Korean delegations; the Chinese were led by the head of their delegation, Wu Dawei; the North Koreans by Kim Gye Gwan. I met first with the Chinese bilaterally, then we had a trilateral lunch. Then I met bilaterally with the North Koreans – with the DPRK – and then trilaterally with the DPRK and the Chinese.

As a result of these meetings today, the Chinese Foreign Ministry issued a statement, which I think you've all seen, announcing the resumption of the six-party process. The precise timing depends on agreement of all the parties. We've reached out to the Russians, to the ROK and to the Japanese. And we will be working on precisely when we could get a precise date. We believe it will be either in this coming month, in November, or possibly in December. It is for us, from the U.S. point of view, very important that the next session of the Six-Party Talks be very well prepared, because we want to make substantial progress when we do meet.

Let me just mention the tone of the meetings today. The tone was very positive. We had a really in-depth discussion of the issues. As you know the DPRK was especially concerned that we address the situation of the financial measures that has, in their view, held up the talks for about a year now. We agreed that we could – that we will find a mechanism within the six-party process to address these financial measures, that we would – it would probably be some kind of a working group to deal with this, and that we would try to address it that way. Of course, addressing it will require – this needs to be done with the cooperation of the DPRK and of course addressing the problem that caused this whole issue, which is the illicit activities.

We also had a discussion about the need to achieve rapid progress on the implementation of the September 2005 statement, and in that connection we all reaffirmed – including the DPRK delegation – reaffirmed our commitment to the September statement and to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

We discussed a number of other subjects but I think that's the main issue, and maybe I can go to questions.

QUESTION: What do you think specifically drove them back? ...[Inaudible]

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: You'll have to ask them. I didn't say to them, "By the way, what brought you back here?" I usually don't question things like that. But it was clear that the atmosphere was very constructive, and I was pleased first of all that they're returning and, secondly, that they reaffirmed their commitment to the September statement.

QUESTION: By their reaffirming their commitment to the September statement, does that indicate that all that we've seen in the last month, was it an indication that that was in error? Are they just wiping that clean?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: I mean, the testing of a nuclear weapon. They've gone back to where they were last September, so what do you make of that?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: They made the point that they went nuclear, and when they made that announcement -- I believe it was on Valentine's Day in 2005, if memory serves me correctly, that is in February 2005, that is when they said they went nuclear -- I made it very clear that the United States does not accept the DPRK as a nuclear state, and neither does China, neither does most anyone else. Now what we are looking for is progress to implement this statement and denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

QUESTION: Did the North Koreans put any conditions to returning to the talks?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: They did not. They made very clear these were not conditions, but they wanted to hear that we would address the issue of the financial measures in the context of the talks, and I said we were prepared to create a mechanism, a working group, to address these financial issues. That is, to discuss these and for the purpose of resolving them. But I emphasized this has to be done consistent with legal obligations, but also consistent with their cooperation.

QUESTION: Thank you. Did North Korea give any undertakings about not holding any more nuclear tests or similar actions?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I did not ask for any undertakings in that regard. I think, obviously, to go ahead and have another nuclear test would be entirely inconsistent with the meetings we just had. I think it's self-evident that they should not engage in these kinds of provocations.

I feel this is not geographically well distributed, but I'll go again to the left here. Okay?

QUESTION: Steve MacDonnel from ABC Australia. We heard reports, I think from a South Korean newspaper, that the Koreans had apologized – the North Koreans had apologized – for this test. Can you tell us something of their tone in the talks you've just had? Was it apologetic? What was it like?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: It was very businesslike. I would not choose to describe it as apologetic. I think it's fair to say it was very businesslike, and we kept very much on the subject of getting back to the talks. But, very importantly, I stressed – and they agreed – that the purpose of the talks is to implement the joint statement, and not just to have more talks. And I did make the point to them that the events of recent months have certainly set back the process, and made the process difficult, and this is all the more reason why we need to make rapid progress to implement the joint statement.

I want to emphasize we are a long way from our goal. Still, I'm very pleased -- we're very pleased that the DPRK is committing to return to the talks, to implement the statement. But as someone who has been involved in this, I have not broken out the cigars and champagne quite yet, believe me.

Anyone over *here*? [Gestures to right half of room] This the quiet group. Okay. Yeah.

QUESTION: I'm with the Spanish News Agency. How confident are you about the – the DPRK is going to return to the talks, because this is not the first time they talk about – a few weeks later they, they just change their minds? And also can we consider that you felt bilateral talks here – I mean in terms of the – what is the influence of the Chinese in this trilateral talks? They just offered, or can we say that you actually held bilateral talks with DPRK?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I would say we held – the Chinese ordered, organized trilateral talks, and during the course of these trilateral talks we broke off to have some bilateral discussions -- but it was in the framework of this trilateral talk. As for whether they'll actually come to the six-party process, I think we do have a very clear understanding today. I have trouble predicting next week, let alone next month, but we'll see. I've always been guided by the fact that I think it makes a lot of sense for the DPRK to get back to these talks. I don't think the situation is getting any easier for them staying away from these talks, and so we'll have to see.

We had these bilateral discussions. It was not a negotiation, I want to emphasize that. And our consistent position is that all the negotiations must be done in the six-party process. But this was an effort to have a discussion based on China's indication to do this. And I think one of the important dynamics of recent weeks has been the very close U.S.-Chinese effort to work together. And again I am proceeding very carefully, but I must say that I think today was a good day in the process of having China and the United States work together on this issue. Yes.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: I believe you said that you told the DPRK side that the U.S. does not accept North – the DPRK as a nuclear state –

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Yes. They didn't ask me to, but I thought it was useful to mention that, yes.

QUESTION: Well, did they say anything? Did they respond to that at all?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: They heard me. They heard me very clearly, but I don't want to give you a memorandum of conversation of what were private discussions. But again, very businesslike discussions, and I think both sides clearly understood each other's point of view. Yes.

QUESTION: What will happen with process of the sanctions by the UN Security Council?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I made very clear that the UN Security Council resolution stands, and that this was not a subject of our discussion. They don't like it, but it stands. The issue that they discussed was the issue of the financial measures that were their reason for staying away from the talks for the last year. We were not discussing the UN Security Council resolution, except for me to make the point that that stands. That's an international obligation. Yes.

QUESTION: What time did the discussions begin?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I think we got out there around 10:00 in the morning, and I believe we got back around 5:00, a little after 5:00, so altogether there were seven hours of talks – bilaterally, trilaterally, and sometimes just standing around.

QUESTION: I'm just wondering, could you say – you said you got out there at 10:00. Can you tell us a bit about where "there" is, and what the location was, and what you think a realistic timetable would be before the talks actually commence again.

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Okay, I mean we don't have any hard, fixed notion yet of when the talks would start. For us, it is very important that we prepare for this next round. And so, we don't want to rush into these talks. We want to be well prepared. Presumably we will be having some initial consultations with some of our partners, and so we would expect to be in these talks certainly before the – certainly I would say in December, if not before.

As for how we arrived there around – I'm sorry did you want some –

QUESTION: Where the location was...

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Oh. Yes. The location was out at the Diaoyutai facility, which is where we had the Six-Party Talks in the past. Um. [Laughter] And we had – it was – let me see, we had – the talks were in one of the villas, and then the lunch was in another villa, but I forget what villas they were. And as you know, China is hosting some forty-eight heads of government from Africa, so China has had a very busy diplomatic day.

Let me ask this gentleman who – he hasn't had his first question yet, so. Yeah, go ahead.

QUESTION: The Secretary has said repeatedly that there's no sense in coming back to the talks for the sake of talking.

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: That's right.

QUESTION: So what was it concretely that convinced you that the North Koreans are coming with something to offer? In other words, you've also said that Kim Jong Il – you're not convinced that Kim Jong Il is really willing to negotiate away his nuclear weapons. Are you now for any reason?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Well, obviously we have to test the proposition in the talks. Perhaps you came in late here, but I did make the point that the DPRK delegation had reiterated more than once their commitment to the implementation of the September joint statement, which is the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. So, I made very clear that when we get to the talks, we want to make sure there is rapid progress on that, and that we would be exploring ideas for how to – what the best way to make rapid progress on that is. But in answer to your question, we have to test the proposition, and frankly it's not going to be over till it's over. So. Yes.

QUESTION: What would be your definition of substantial progress in the next round of talks?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I don't know. I'll know it when I see it. But we have a joint statement, we have undertakings on the part of all parties. I think the key undertaking is denuclearization. Obviously, we'd like to see progress there, and we'd like it early. But in the coming weeks, we'll be working on how we might come up with a process to make sure we get that early progress. I did make the point that our process has suffered by the events of recent weeks and months, and that is all the more reason to move ahead.

QUESTION: The UN Security Council Resolution also makes it clear that North Korea has to carry out complete verifiable and irreversible dismantlement of its nuclear program...

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Yes, consistent with the September statement, yes.

QUESTION: So, what do you expect North Korea to do towards that goal in the lead up to these talks?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I think you know, as we implement the joint statement we have to figure out a mechanism that assures us that the North Koreans have

addressed implementation, so we'll have to work on the details of that. And that's why I've said that we don't want to rush into the talks; we want them to be very well planned. And you've obviously put your finger on some of the tough parts, but there will be plenty of time, starting tomorrow morning, to think about all those tough issues. But what we've got today is an agreement to come back to the talks, and so now we have to work on means to make sure that we make progress. Yes.

QUESTION: Do you have any plans or would you like to alter the format of the Six-Party Talks in any way?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I'm sorry?

QUESTION: Do you have any plans or are you considering altering the format of the talks in any way? Is that something—?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: We certainly didn't discuss changing the format. We do believe – we have always believed – that the six-party format is the right format. I must say we've had to endure many months where there was, I think, concern about whether it was the right format, but we do believe it's the right format. So we'll see. We'll be working on some ideas for how to move this forward, but we weren't going to work on any ideas until we actually were able to get a commitment. And I think we now have a commitment from all the parties.

QUESTION: Thank you. North Korea has been saying that it won't return to the Six-Party Talks until the U.S. ends the financial measures on –

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: That's not what they said today.

QUESTION: So, why do you think they came back – they agreed to come back to the working group?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: You would have to find their telephone number and ask them. I don't know. I didn't ask them why they came back today, but they did not make resolution of the financial measures a condition. What they wanted us to be prepared to discuss, [was] to address the financial measures in the six-party process. And we're prepared to do that. We're prepared to form a working group. We're prepared to figure out some mechanism where we can deal with that. But, whether we succeed in resolving it will depend to some extent on their cooperation to get out of these illicit activities. It will also depend on some legal matters, but we're prepared to address this in the six-party process.

QUESTION: Are you going to meet with Mr. Kim Gye Gwan and with Mr. Wu Dawei tomorrow as well?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I don't believe we have – there is some talk about it, but I have to get back to Washington. I've been on the road for a while.

QUESTION: [Inaudible] I understand that you are going back to the U.S. tomorrow –

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Yes, I got in last night, and I'm going to go back tomorrow afternoon.

QUESTION: So my question is, how flexible can the U.S. government be about the financial sanctions?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Well again, we need this issue to be resolved. And by that I mean we need the DPRK to get out of this kind of illicit activity. We didn't start this dance. I mean, this was started because the DPRK was involved with illicit activities. So if we're going to resolve this, they need to get out of that. And obviously we're going to have to work through a lot of issues there, and they have to be consistent with legal processes that are underway, but also consistent with the cooperation that the DPRK is getting out of this business. So, I'm simply saying that we've agreed to take this up in the six-party process, and we'll work on a mechanism for trying to deal with it. Yes.

QUESTION: On the illicit activity front, what can you tell about this ship that was detained in Greece, near Lesbos, over the weekend?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I don't know. I've been busy today. I haven't really... Again, what we discussed today was not the UN Security Council Resolution 1718. We discussed financial measures that have been around for over a year now.

QUESTION: You mentioned that today's meeting was organized by China. Can you just explain a little bit more about that? And also, were you surprised when you heard that North Korea was coming back to discuss the Six-Party Talks?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: It takes a lot to surprise me these days. Now, the Chinese have been – we have been working very closely with China. We knew that they had some hopes that they could have a fruitful trilateral meeting. When Secretary Rice was here in Beijing, I guess what, nine or ten days ago, we had a considerable discussion about the overall situation, but also leaving the door open to the DPRK coming back to the process.

When I was accompanying Secretary Rice, I also had dinner with my Chinese counterpart, Wu Dawei. Late last week, the Chinese were in touch with Dr. Rice and asked that she would agree to have me come back. Dr. Rice contacted me while I was in the South Pacific, actually en route to Australia. And so, I cut short my visit to Australia. I went to Sydney, and then I did not go on to Canberra, where I had a full day's program. But I turned around in Sydney and came back yesterday, arriving here on the flight from Sydney.

QUESTION: To form the working group is your proposition, or a Chinese position?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: No, it was something we have talked about for some time now. This was not a new proposal at all. I have mentioned this in several occasions. Many occasions, actually. And we're pleased that the DPRK saw this as a useful approach. We do feel this is the right way to do this. What was important was that they have not made a condition of attending the talks. For us it was very important that no one should create conditions for attending the talks. We have a good agreement from September, and we should be getting on to implement that agreement.

QUESTION: Sorry, just one last try. In the past, you've made it clear –

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: One last try? Come on. I'm been answering all the questions to the best of my ability. [Laughter.] Sorry, go ahead.

QUESTION: In the past, you've made it clear that you'd hoped that China would put more pressure on Pyongyang to come to the table with these talks. Do you think that additional Chinese pressure has played an important role this time? How would you characterize China's role?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I think China has been very engaged. Very engaged. I think China felt the way we all felt, that this was our process. That is, this was our six-party process, and when the DPRK refused to attend it, I think China felt very strongly that as a co-author of that process, that China really wanted to make sure that the DPRK came back to it. And I know a lot of people have wondered why we didn't just negotiate bilaterally, rather than through the six-party process. But I think the fact that China and other countries have felt so strongly about getting the DPRK back in the process results from the fact, or is due to the fact, that they were part of the process themselves. So I think the close U.S.-China cooperation that we have developed in recent weeks and months is due in part to the fact that we had a multilateral process. And so we feel that our multilateral process is very much validated, and we intend to continue this. Yes.

QUESTION: Sorry, I came late, so I haven't heard the initial part of this press conference, so I ask a most basic question. Was there any condition DPRK demand for getting back to the six-party talks?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: They did not make any condition. They wanted our assurance that we would take up – that we would address the issue of the financial measures in the six-party process. As you know, in the past they said that financial issues need to be resolved before they come to the process, but that's not what they were saying. They wanted us to address them when we got to the process. And if you hadn't come late, you would've heard me say about five times that we agreed to address these within the six-party process consistent with the legal issues, but also consistent with the DPRK cooperating -- that we would address these through a working group or some kind of mutually acceptable mechanism. We do want to resolve these, but it also depends on the DPRK's willingness to get out of the illicit activity business.

QUESTION: What do you think was the deal clincher? If you were to hazard a guess, would the combination of the onset of winter months and the reduction in China's fuel shipments to North Korea have persuaded North Korea?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Oh, I don't want to, you know – my job isn't to guess. That's your job. [Laughter] China put together a meeting today, a trilateral meeting. They asked us to come. We came. They asked the DPRK delegation to come. That delegation came. We worked through some problems, and I think we have an agreement to restart the talks. I hope we'll be doing that in the coming weeks.

And don't tell me you came late, too.

QUESTION: Thank you. You used the words "positive" and "constructive" –

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Did I? Oh, the meeting. The atmosphere of the meeting. Yes.

QUESTION: Anyway, I remember in the past you expressed your desire to visit Pyongyang to push the process, and that you in fact were invited publicly. Do you think the atmosphere is good for contemplating going to Pyongyang to—?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: Oh, well, we took a step today to getting this process back on track. This process has suffered a lot in recent weeks by the moves the DPRK has made. So, let's get this thing back on track. Let's get back to the talks. Let's start making some progress, and then we'll look at the travel schedules after that.

Yes. And then you, sir.

QUESTION: [inaudible] You know, like a different level before to holding the Six-Party Talks? Because this happened before that in several rounds you meet first for the working group, [inaudible] financial measures, and then later you hold –

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: You know, we haven't really worked out how we might do that. Initially, I would imagine we would want to follow up on the discussions we had in New York, I think last March. So we might follow up on that, a sort of informational exchange. I don't think we've really yet identified how this might work. Again, I think if the DPRK gets out of the business of illicit activities, we'd have a lot of possibilities to resolve this once and for all.

QUESTION: With NPR. I'm just wondering if this is the end of the sort of the trilateral track? Is this going to continue, or was it just a set of jumper cables? Is there a future role for this trilateral forum? Thank you.

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: A set of jumper cables. Well, there are only two of those, so the metaphor doesn't really work. [Laughter] Jumper cables. You know, look. We have met in a number of different configurations in the context of the Six-Party Talks. For example, a couple of weeks ago, Secretary Rice met with her counterparts from the Republic of Korea and from Japan, so that was another trilateral process. I think the six-party platform really does offer a broad number of configurations, with the understanding that everyone needs to be – all of the six parties need to be in this process. We do believe that the six-party process offers us the flexibility to mix and match as we need to develop ideas, to develop approaches. And I cannot emphasize enough that, assuming we finally get to the end of this – that is, to the denuclearization – you will see all six parties playing a very key role. It was not by accident that these six parties came together. I do believe we have a good process, and our task is to continue to make it work. And I think in so doing, we need to continue to show the diplomatic flexibility and just a willingness to approach it in different ways with different ideas. And I think what you saw today was part of that process.

QUESTION: Did China tell you how they brought the DPRK back to the table, because it's reported that China cut off the oil supply to DPRK.

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: You'll have to ask the Chinese. They asked Dr. Rice if she would send me to this informal meeting here in Beijing on the 31st, and Dr. Rice agreed to do that. How they got the DPRK to come to the table, you'll have to ask them.

QUESTION: You've mentioned a few times the need for good preparations for the next round. Could you give us a little more detail about what kind of preparations are required?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: One of your colleagues asked the question, how do we ensure that the denuclearization is complete and verifiable, irreversible? In approaching how this denuclearization would be accomplished, you need to do a little preparation for that to be sure. Also, there is an electricity plan, for example, that you recall the Republic of Korea put forward. We need to address that. This is a conventional electricity plant. I've said many times, and I'll say it again: The DPRK needs electricity and needs electricity quickly. We would hope that there will be further development of what the ROK has in mind. I do want to emphasize that we're looking at the overall September agreement, and not just proceeding with an element of it. There are a lot of undertakings in it. It does require a lot of work. I think what's important is that now, as of today, we have agreement of all six parties to attend the next session and to do so on the basis of implementing the joint statement.

I think you always regret doing this, but all right, one more question.

QUESTION: Thank you very much. Do you think that it is probable that DPRK is accepting that the process of the Six-Party Talks is to shake the U.S. or the international society just before the UN Security Council, the sanction list is completed?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I think the sanction list is going forward in the UN Security Council on a different track. Again, I want to emphasize we made no commitments whatsoever to any changes on the UN issue. The DPRK does not like the UN Security Council sanctions. They said so. But at the same time, the way to end the Security Council sanctions is to comply with the Security Council resolution, which is to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. Let's hope we can get going on that task. Thank you very much. Oh, all right, one more.

QUESTION: I have a question. Could you just tell us what your plans are for today and tomorrow and whether there will be another briefing tomorrow?

ASST. SECRETARY HILL: I probably ought to get some dinner and then get some sleep. After that, I don't know. I'm leaving sometime tomorrow afternoon. I've kept things fairly flexible because I might have additional discussions. At this point, we don't have plans for any meetings of the kind we had today. All right. Good to see you all. I hope I'll see you again soon.

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