Chief Correspondent Elizabeth Farnsworth talks with Peter Hayes, director of the Nautilus Institute at Berkeley, about his wind power project in North Korea.
ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH: At a time of increasing tension between the United States and North Korea, a Berkeley-based think tank, the Nautilus Institute, has opened a unique window on that seldom-visited country. In a small North Korean village, Nautilus documented what one might call quiet diplomacy. It involved building windmills, or, to use the proper technical term, "wind power turbines," in Unhari. Nautilus documented the work on home video. Five technicians from the US, headed by Peter Hayes, spent a total of five weeks last year in the village, most recently in October. They were joined by up to 50 North Korean counterparts, some from the Ministry of Electric Power. In all, the bi-national team built seven wind turbines, plus the powerhouse and control systems for delivering reliable electricity to 20 households, a medical clinic, and kindergarten. The project was funded by the W. Alton Jones Foundation, which focuses on environmental and nuclear issues. Most of the wind turbines were purchased from Siemens of Germany. 

ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH: The project was in place in time to provide reliable electricity just as the rainy season was about to begin. The village's previous power supply was provided by a diesel generator that worked intermittently and for about one hour daily. Now, the village's lights are on all the time, and the women are not MSNBC the food aid projects are primarily about bringing food in ships, and then it's delivered to the North Koreans who then actually distribute it in the North to the actual people who are starving. There are very few examples of westerners, let alone Americans, working shoulder to shoulder, side by side in a development project as against an aid delivery project. And so to our knowledge, this, in fact, is the first instance.

PETER HAYES: And do you think it is going to work, or do you think it will fail?

ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH: I would say that it is going to work. It has worked in the past, and if we can introduce reliable power that people can, you know, rely on the electricity is not only the need for this kind of functional engagement on purely technical issues. So we are really doing two things at once: You know, on the ground we are building these wind turbines, and we are doing it as an opportunity to understand what is going on in this country in a way that is not necessarily through the photography - you know - everyone is on a high state of alert; things are very tense at the moment. And what we have done is introduced reliable power that people can, you know, rely on. And so, I think that what we have done is introduced reliable power that people can, you know, rely on.

PETER HAYES: Right.

ELIZABETH FARNSWORTH: How poor was the village? You've worked in many other, very poor countries.

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