

**To: Members, Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**From: Keith Luse, Senior Professional Staff Member**  
**(Minority)**  
**Subj: North Korea Trip Report**  
**Date: March 6, 2008**

### Introduction

The February 12 to 16, 2008 trip to North Korea was taken with the intent to answer and inform discussion on a number of pending questions, the following included.

Why did the North Koreans not provide a complete and correct declaration of their nuclear program? What is the status of disablement at the Yongbyon nuclear complex? Is additional information needed for North Korea's consideration of the future re-direction of workers at the Yongbyon complex?

How secure is North Korea's nuclear arsenal? What safeguards are in place to protect against someone within the North Korean infrastructure with malicious intent, or for personal profit, from obtaining access to weapons or materials? Many North Korean workers at Yongbyon are displeased with their country's willingness to disable Yongbyon facilities. What quality control mechanisms are established throughout North Korea, so that authorities will know if plutonium, highly enriched uranium, or other materials related to nuclear research and technology are missing?

While focus has largely been placed on North Korea's nuclear program, what is the status of other components of the overall weapons of mass destruction (WMD) arsenal? Does North Korea's effort to access outside molecular and biological research relate to that country's weapons program or other projects?

In the U.S. we learned that some North Korean officials are concerned about a possible Chinese intervention impacting North Korea's government. Under what circumstances might the Chinese take such action?

Does North Korea's eventual declaration of their nuclear inventory necessarily suggest a willingness to disarm, and truly eliminate all nuclear weapons and fissile materials?

In 2003, North Korean officials were of the mind that they were more likely to achieve a "nuclear deal" with a Democratic President? Does this continue as prevailing opinion among North Korean leaders?

What constraints are placed on Chairman Kim Chong-il by the North Korean military? Under what conditions will this military machine which has been formed and programmed for decades to confront the United States, consent to complete nuclear disarmament?

## The Americans and Our Itinerary

Dr. Siegfried Hecker, Co-director, Center for International Security and Cooperation, Stanford University, Mr. Joel Wit, Visiting Fellow, U.S. – Korea Institute of the John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and I concurrently travelled to the DPRK. While rare accommodation is made for U.S. aircraft landing in Pyongyang, or to travel by way of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), going to North Korea typically requires traveling through Beijing. Travelers go to the North Korean Embassy to obtain the necessary visa, and then on to the office of the North Korean airlines – Air Koryo, to purchase tickets for one of the bi-weekly flights to Pyongyang. As my request to travel by train from China to Pyongyang was denied, Air Koryo was again the option of necessity.

Our time in North Korea included three sessions with Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officials, a day-long visit to the Yongbyon nuclear complex, meetings with English language students at the Pyongyang Foreign Language University, and a North Korean-prompted visit to the School of Music. Dr. Hecker scheduled separate meetings with North Korean education and health officials.

A request to meet with North Korean military officials was again denied. Repeated and intense discussions occurred with MFA officials regarding the lack of a complete and correct declaration of North Korea's nuclear program by December 31 of last year. Vice Foreign Minister Kim Gye Gwan was unavailable to meet.

## Background

On October 3, 2007, President Bush affirmed the Six-Party agreement, of the same date, in Beijing, which “reflects the common commitment of the participants in the Six-Party Talks to realize a Korean Peninsula that is free of nuclear weapons”. Under the agreement, North Korea “agreed to disable all existing nuclear facilities subject to abandonment under the September 2005 Joint Statement and the February 13 agreement; agreed to provide a complete and correct declaration of all its nuclear programs by December 31, 2007, and reaffirmed its commitment not to transfer nuclear materials, technology, or know-how”.

North Korea and the United States expressed their commitment to moving toward a full diplomatic relationship, and that bilateral exchanges would increase. Regarding removal of North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism and advancing “the process of terminating the application of the Trading with the Enemy Act with respect to the DPRK, the United States will fulfill its commitments to the DPRK in parallel with the DPRK's actions based on consensus reached at the meetings of the Working Group on Normalization of DPRK-U.S. Relations”.

Also, “in accordance with the February 13 agreement, economic, energy and humanitarian assistance up to the equivalent of one million tons of HFO (inclusive of the 100,000 tons of HFO already delivered), will be provided to the DPRK. Specific modalities will be finalized through discussion by the Working Group on Economy and Energy Cooperation”.

## The Five Parties Have “Not Delivered”

During our meetings in Pyongyang, MFA officials stated they had slowed the disabling process, and that a complete and correct declaration of their nuclear program had not been forthcoming, due to “technical reasons”.

The DPRK definition of “ technical reasons” breaks down into a couple of categories:

- 1) DPRK officials insist that the other Five Parties have not provided HFO or the agreed-upon “HFO-equivalents” according to schedule.
- 2) The United States has not proceeded with “political compensation”, meaning removal of North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism and terminating application of the Trading with the Enemy Act to North Korea.

On the latter issue, we affirmed to MFA representatives that Bush Administration officials held consultations with Congress and were prepared to proceed with changes related to the list of state sponsors of terrorism, and The Trading with the Enemy Act. However, the absence of a complete and correct declaration by December 31 prevented U.S. officials from proceeding.

Upon returning to Washington, the State Department’s perspective was requested in response to DPRK claims that HFO and HFO-equivalent shipments had not arrived on schedule. According to the Department, *“The Five Parties have accepted in principle the DPRK’s aim to receive monthly tranches of 50,000 tons per month, on a rotational basis, and have made efforts to keep to that schedule”*. In reality, North Korean claims about tardiness in delivery are correct. However, what North Korean officials are not factoring, is that significant administrative and structural challenges faced the countries providing HFO and HFO-equivalent materials. The timeliness of delivery was and is consequently impacted. (Was the issue of how timeliness of delivery might be impacted by the “challenges”, aired at the time of the original agreement?)

## Three Points for Capitol Hill

On the matter of North Korea missing the December 31, 2007 deadline to submit a “complete and correct declaration” of its nuclear program, North Korean officials conveyed a similar theme, with an assortment of words and phrases during our three meetings. The Americans stressed that the eventual declaration should include comprehensive information related to the export of any component of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, as well. Following are some quotations from those meetings.

*“We fulfilled our obligations under disablement terms. The discharge of spent fuel rods is being delayed for technical reasons. Your U.S. partners understand”*.

*“The obligations by the five parties are significantly delayed. The U.S. was to take action for action political compensation. We don’t know what the U.S. has done and have no schedule of what it will do”*.

*“One million tons of HFO was committed, with one-half to be delivered in-kind. Five hundred thousand tons of HFO (in equivalent), should have been delivered in*

*equipment and materials. Only two hundred thousand tons of HFO has been delivered so far. We are adjusting the speed of disablement to the speed of the five parties”.*

*“We’ll adjust the speed of settlement as much as the U.S. moves forward. We don’t know when the other three hundred thousand tons of HFO will be delivered”.*

*“There will be no complete disablement until political compensation occurs by the U.S. side. Compensation actions by the five parties are very slow. We hope the October 3 agreement will be fully implemented”.*

*“Syria has been declared per the October 3 agreement (meaning there would be no transfer of nuclear technology, etc.) The uranium enrichment program does not exist. We have provided clarification on the tube issue”.*

*“We’ve given plan information to the U.S. side. We have declared all of our other facilities to the IAEA in the 90’s.....don’t need to declare this time. We have already declared Syria.”*

*In response to encouragement from an American that North Korea should “get as far down the road as possible”, in negotiations with the Bush Administration, a North Korean official said, “Negotiations are deadlocked, not due to a lack of will of both sides, but due to technical reasons. This will be resolved through more consultations”.*

When asked by an American to clarify, “.....in terms of export, what is a complete declaration?”, a North Korean official responded *“North Korea will declare all”.*

North Korean officials were informed that Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee were deeply concerned regarding the missed December deadline to submit a complete and clear declaration. Given Member concerns, the North Koreans were asked for a message to convey to the Committee. In response, they offered three points for conveyance to Capitol Hill.

- 1) Both the U.S. and the DPRK negotiators understood each other very well.*
- 2) The delays (with the declaration), are caused by technical reasons.*
- 3) Both sides are working hard to resolve those technical issues.*

### Visit to the Yongbyon Complex

Dr. Hecker’s summary of our visit to the Yongbyon nuclear complex is attached. In addition to visiting sites where disablement actions have occurred, we met with Dr. Ri Song Hop, former Director of the Yongbyon complex, who retired from that position and now serves in the capacity of Counselor to the General Department of Atomic Energy. During our time at the Yongbyon complex, North Korean officials commended the American technicians present during the disablement process. The North Koreans also consented to our taking photos.

In response to a question from the Americans about the security conditions of North Korea’s nuclear weapons and material arsenal, North Korean officials insisted that their

weapons and materials are securely maintained, and that it would not be possible for access to be gained by someone with malicious intent or purpose of profit.

### Japan Abductees

North Korean officials refused to discuss matters related to abductees from Japan in North Korea.

### Meeting with Swedish and Other Officials

The Embassy of Sweden represents U.S. interests in North Korea. Swedish Ambassador Mats Foyer scheduled a luncheon meeting at his residence with several diplomatic colleagues, including Roman Iwaszkiewicz, Ambassador of Poland, Dr. Thomas Schafer, Ambassador of Germany, Martin Tomco, Ambassador of the Czech Republic, John Everard, Ambassador of Britain, Ovidiu Liviu Iancu, Charge d'Affaires for Romania, Yordan Pamukov, Charge d'affaires, Bulgaria and Ingrid Bergman, First Secretary, Sweden. Primary points of discussions focused on Dr. Hecker's impressions of the Yongbyon disabling process and possible application of a Nunn Lugar cooperative threat reduction project in North Korea. The Americans inquired about the status of European Union discussions with North Korea on human rights issues.

### Concluding Remarks

Chairman Kim Chong-il may be the only person in North Korea who truly knows the basis for North Korea not submitting a complete and correct declaration of its nuclear weapons program by December 31, 2007. Endless speculation circulates regarding North Korean intentions for the short-term, as well as future prospects of eliminating the nuclear weapons program. There are other issues and questions regarding dismantlement and eventual elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons inventory.

Is the North Korean military resisting MFA efforts to substantively engage with the U.S. and the other five countries? Chairman Kim's best efforts to orchestrate a balance among competing interests within the North, may be a "stretch too far" for North Korean military hardliners. Declaring and discarding the jewel of their arsenal will be difficult for those viewing it as the ultimate deterrent.

Attachment---Dr Siegfried Hecker report