



Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs
Statement of Assistant Secretary Christopher R. Hill
“Dealing With North Korea’s Nuclear Programs”
June 14, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this opportunity to discuss with the Committee the efforts of the United States and like-minded countries to deal with the threat of North Korea’s nuclear programs. The Special Envoy for Six-Party Talks, Ambassador Joseph DeTrani, is with me for this important discussion. Ambassador DeTrani does not have a separate statement, but would welcome the opportunity to respond to your questions.

I want to emphasize two points today.

First, the President’s policy is to achieve the full denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula by peaceful multilateral diplomacy, through the Six-Party Talks. The substantive and comprehensive proposal we made at the last round of Six-Party Talks, almost one year ago, remains on the table, and we are prepared to discuss it when the DPRK returns to the Talks.

Second, the DPRK has an historic opportunity now to improve its relations with the international community and to reap the full rewards of trade, aid and investment. But to change its place in the world, it must address the concerns of its neighbors and the international community. To date, the DPRK has not demonstrated any readiness to do so.

Six-Party Talks

The United States has adhered to three basic principles to resolve the North’s nuclear threat. First, we seek the dismantlement, verifiably and irreversibly, of all DPRK nuclear programs – nothing less. We cannot accept a partial solution that does not deal with the entirety of the problem,

allowing North Korea to threaten others continually with a revival of its nuclear program. Second, because the North's nuclear programs threaten its neighbors and the integrity of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime, the threat can best be dealt with through multilateral diplomacy. Third, we will not reward North Korea for coming into compliance with its past obligations.

While the DPRK's nuclear ambition is a decades-old problem, our effort to deal with it in a comprehensive manner through multilateral means began only a few years ago.

We worked closely with all of North Korea's neighbors to lay the groundwork for the Six-Party Talks, and the first round was held in Beijing August 27-29, 2003. All six parties at that first meeting agreed on the objective of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

The second round of Six-Party Talks was in February 2004. The parties agreed to regularize the talks, and to establish a working group to set issues up for resolution at the plenary meetings. At the second round of talks, the ROK offered fuel aid to the DPRK, if there were a comprehensive and verifiable halt of its nuclear programs as a first step toward complete nuclear dismantlement. Other non-U.S. parties subsequently expressed a willingness to do so as well.

The third working group and plenary sessions at the third round of talks, held nearly a year ago in Beijing, were useful and constructive. The U.S. tabled a comprehensive and substantive proposal, which the DPRK at the time called "serious," which it certainly was. All parties agreed to meet again by end-September 2004.

During each of the working group and plenary meetings, the U.S. met separately and directly with all of the parties, including the DPRK delegation.

Despite its commitment to rejoin the Talks by end-September, and its vague statements that it remains committed to the Six-Party process, the DPRK has not yet agreed to return to the table. While the DPRK has made public statements about our June proposal, it has not responded formally to us.

We have had meetings with all the parties since June 2004, including the North Koreans. These meetings are important to ensure communication, but they are not negotiations. They cannot take the place of the negotiations in the Six-Party Talks to achieve the dismantlement of the North's nuclear programs or end the North's international isolation.

Ambassador DeTrani has met with the DPRK Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Pak Gil-yon, five times in the so-called New York Channel, in August, November and December of last year, and in May and June 2005. We engaged in those meetings because we wanted the North Koreans to hear the U.S. position directly from us. The North Koreans indicated they are committed to the Six-Party process, but did not agree to return to the table by a date-certain.

I'll quote what the President said last month on the North Korea nuclear issue to make that position crystal clear: "We want diplomacy to be given the chance to work." As Secretary Rice said recently, we have no intention to invade or attack. We deal with North Korea as a sovereign nation, in the Six-Party Talks and at the United Nations.

While of course there is a range of options to deal with the North's nuclear threat, simply ignoring it is not one of them. Our policy is to pursue a peaceful diplomatic solution, but we need to see results from the diplomacy.

Since becoming Assistant Secretary in March, I have traveled to East Asia three times, meeting with my counterparts in Japan, the Republic of Korea, and China, to consult on how to move the Six-Party process forward. I also met with the Russian senior official in Brussels in May. My colleagues from those governments have made frequent visits to Washington. All five parties have called on the North to return to the Talks and negotiate seriously to end its nuclear programs and its international isolation. The North has cited a variety of pretexts for refusing to rejoin the talks, even as it restates its commitment to the Six-Party process and the goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. That casts increasing doubt on how serious the DPRK really is about ending its nuclear ambitions. Frankly, we don't at this point know the answers.

Certainly, the developments we have seen on the part of the North Koreans have not been encouraging. Since the last round of Six-Party Talks

just a year ago, the DPRK has failed to abide by its commitment to another round of talks by September 2004; announced that it had manufactured nuclear weapons and was indefinitely suspending participation in the Six-Party Talks; declared itself to be a nuclear weapons state; announced that its self-declared missile test moratorium was no longer binding; conducted a short-range ballistic missile test; reportedly threatened to transfer nuclear material; and announced that it was reprocessing another load of plutonium from spent fuel rods from the Yongbyon reactor.

The other parties are unwavering in their opposition to North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons.

China has the closest relationship with North Korea of any of the Six Parties and it is for this reason that we continue to engage the Chinese leadership on the North's lack of willingness to make a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula a reality. The Chinese leadership at the most senior levels has – in recognition of the destabilizing effect a nuclear Korea could have on its own security interests – delivered pointed messages to the North on denuclearization and returning to the Talks. We believe China can and should do more. China should do whatever is necessary to get its neighbor back to the table.

We have excellent coordination with Japan and the Republic of Korea. President Bush and President Roh at their June 10 Summit in Washington agreed to continue to work closely together for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We are also in regular touch at the highest levels with the Government of Japan, a valued partner in the Six-Party process. Russia too has expressed opposition to the possession of nuclear weapons by the DPRK.

North Korea's Opportunity

To succeed in achieving the peaceful resolution of the North Korea nuclear issue, the North has got to return to the Six-Party Talks and stay there for serious negotiations.

Against the backdrop of the Six-Party Talks, the DPRK appears to be trying to undertake some measures in response to its disastrous economic situation. The door is open for the DPRK, by addressing the concerns of the international community, to vastly improve the lives of its people, enhance

its own security, move toward normalizing its relations with the United States and others, and raise its stature in the world.

The United States, working with our allies and others, remains committed to resolving the nuclear issue through peaceful diplomatic means. While we are not prepared to reward the DPRK for coming back into compliance with its international obligations, we have laid out the path to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue.

Of course, to achieve a wholly transformed relationship with the United States, North Korea must address other issues of concern to us and the international community as well. It must change its behavior on human rights, address the issues underlying its appearance on the U.S. list of state-sponsored terrorism, eliminate all its weapons of mass destruction programs and missile technology proliferation, and adopt a less provocative conventional force disposition. It must put an end to such illegal activities as counterfeiting, narcotics smuggling and money laundering.

The starting point is the strategic decision now by Pyongyang to recognize that its nuclear programs make it less, not more, secure, and to decide to eliminate them permanently, thoroughly, and transparently, subject to effective verification. We are working together with the other parties to bring the DPRK to understand that it is in its own self-interest to make that decision.

We will continue to work closely with the Congress and this Committee as we proceed.

That concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. DeTrani and I look forward to responding to your questions.