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"THE NORTH KOREA DEADLOCK: A REPORT FROM THE REGION"

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C O N T E N T S

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KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

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PANELISTS:

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. STEINBERG: Well, good morning and welcome to Brookings. We've got a busy program today and a lot of people here, so I want to give our panelists a good chance to talk and also to give as many of you as possible an opportunity to ask questions.

It's good to see such a good turnout here. I can't imagine what brought you here this morning.

[Laughter.]

MR. STEINBERG: And good to see so many friends from both the think tank community, the media, and other interested parties here.

Before we begin, I want to acknowledge the fact that today co-sponsoring this event are our good friends at the Washington Center of the Asia Society, and we're pleased to welcome members of the Asia Society to Brookings this morning. And before I ask Joe Snyder, the Director, to come up and say a few words, I also want to thank the Korea Foundation for their generous support to Brookings and to our Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, which helps make events like this possible.

So, Joe, if you want to come up and say a few words, we'd be grateful.

MR. SNYDER: Thank you very much, Jim. On behalf of the Asia Society Washington Center I want to thank the Brookings Institution for joining with us on this program. It's a particularly interesting one, and we're delighted to be able to share the podium with them and to use their wonderful facilities.

I'd also like to convey our thanks to the Hitachi Corporation, which is also helping to sponsor today's event.

Thanks very much.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you, Joe.

Most of our panel needs no introduction. Most notably, Ambassador Pritchard will lead off our program, and you all know Richard Bush, the Director of our Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies and a long-time observer of this region.

We're also fortunate to be joined today by Sook-Jong Lee, who is a fellow here at CNAPS, and so we're going to have an opportunity not only to hear Jack's perspectives following his trip, but also to get some of our perceptions of the response to some of the key actors, notably China and South Korea.

So, without further ado, Ambassador Pritchard, welcome back.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Thanks very much. Good to be back. I've got to tell you, it's warmer in North Korea than it is here.

Before I start and give you some of my observations of the trip, let me just try to put it in perspective.

The trip itself was organized by Professor John Lewis at Stanford. Dr. Lewis has been going to North Korea off and on in a track-two capacity for the last--well, since 1987, and so he's been there about 12 times, very quiet but he's been continuing to dialogue. He asked me to go with him, and I said I'd be very pleased to do that.

Then he was able to make a request of the North Koreans, in addition to a number of issues that he wanted to talk about--the economy, military-first policy, things like that--he also asked if they could see the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. We did not actually know that we would be able to do that until we got there.

Now, before I give you some of my impressions, let me just set a little bit of the ground rules in advance. The presence of the former Director of Los Alamos, Dr. Sig Hecker, made the trip, I think, a little bit more significant in that he brings with him the credibility of being able to understand and put into perspective things that he did see, recognize things that we didn't see. He has been asked to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday, and he is going to be presenting a detailed technical view of everything that we saw at Yongbyon.

So there are parts of what we did and what we saw at Yongbyon that are most appropriately covered by Dr. Hecker, and I will not go into that. I have no doubt during the Q&A you will try to get that out of me, but it is really to your benefit and to mine that Dr. Hecker's observations be the ones that are recorded in terms of being able to understand that.

Now, having said that, I will speak a little bit about what we did and some of what we saw at Yongbyon facilities. But I'll just give you a quick overview and then go into a couple of observations I had. But I'd like to focus a lot on the discussions we had with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel with regard to six-party talks and the possibility of resolving the nuclear issue in a peaceful, negotiated way.

We arrived on Tuesday, the 6th of January, confirmed our schedule, what we'd be doing, had a preliminary discussion with Ambassador Li Gun. He, as you may know, headed the first three-party talks in Beijing in April. He's someone that I have known and negotiated with for about seven years now.

But the main part of our trip really began on Wednesday. In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we were able to have a briefing by members of the Committee for the Promotion of International Trade, and I only bring that up because

there are, you know, just anecdotal observations of the conditions in Pyongyang that I have seen progress over the years, and some of you have been there as well. I have been getting reports myself over the last year about improvements in the quality of life, and everything about North Korea is done in relative terms, not in absolute terms. So I'll speak about that in a minute.

But at the Committee for the Promotion of Trade, they were focused on what they were doing as a result of the reforms that were put in place in July of 2002, things like rezoning lands. They were talking about the rice production that they have. Eighty-five percent of the country is mountainous, and they've got terraces that are, you know, 0.1 hectare in size that are very inefficient. And so their point was to try to rezone land into the flat areas to increase to 0.65 hectares and to have far more efficient use. Whether they do it or not, somebody else will have to observe that.

They did say they had increased their trade by 17 percent over the previous year. But over and above that, the things that I observed from the first trip that I made some several years ago--again, in relative terms--were very striking in my mind. You go from a point where there was almost no vehicular traffic some few years ago, very little bicycle traffic--it was prohibited in Pyongyang--a lot of people walking, to this trip which is some 14 months after the last time I was in Pyongyang, to seeing a great number of vehicles on the street, to the point where the traffic cops actually had something to do rather than just sit in the middle of the street.

People looked better. They were a little bit more active. But perhaps the most striking thing, we asked to go to the market that had been established. You've been seeing and reading over the years about little black market activities that have been springing up, farmers' markets and things like that. Apparently this past summer they organized that and made it legal. So we asked to go, and apparently from summer until now, they've gone through a period of prohibiting foreigners to be in there to just turning their head when the foreigners showed up, the international community, the small group that was there, to actually saying, well, it's fine.

So they actually took us there, and I was stunned by the activity. We went into what could be described as a gymnasium--of course, it was not, but a very large indoor facility--in which there were some 500 vendors. We later asked, you know, what do they have to pay to rent the area, the vending area, the stalls. And it came to the equivalent of about 10 cents a day to rent there. They all had some type of a vest, either red or blue. They all had an identification badge. It was organized, but it was done by the people. It was just jammed full of people doing commerce there. We were being jostled around as people were--in one case, I'm trying to buy a \$2 scroll in one area, and I'm getting bumped out of the way by somebody who just bought an overstuffed chair that they were taking out. But they had clothes, they had vegetables, they had meat, they had a electronics, television, furniture--you name it. It was just remarkable.

Now, that's just one tiny piece, but it is a change that is occurring.

Beyond that, we had some--about nine hours with Vice Foreign Minister Kim Kye-Gwan. He is the normal negotiating counterpart, when there was such a thing as negotiating and discussing with the North Koreans. He's someone also that I have known for some years as well.

In addition to that, we were taken on Thursday to the nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, and I'll come back to that a little bit later.

But the conversations that we had with Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan centering around the six-party talks was an emphasis by him that they really didn't care what the format was. Three-party, six-party, it didn't matter, as long as they were able to have a serious and substantive discussion with the United States. They recognized that the U.S. did not want to have a separate bilateral talk, and that was fine with them. But they nonetheless wanted to engage in a serious conversation in a hope to resolve the current situation in a rather peaceful manner.

One of the things that we did touch upon that I think is important is the HEU program. You all know that Assistant Secretary Kelly--and I joined him in October of 2002--went to Pyongyang to confront the North Koreans about information that we had about a covert HEU--highly enriched uranium--program. At the time we firmly believed that we had heard the North Koreans admit to their program, and in the subsequent weeks, the North Koreans didn't do much to deny that. But over the past year, they have gone from some degree of ambiguity, to neither confirm nor deny, to a denial.

We talked to Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan about this, saying very specifically that in the discussions with the United States, any resolution of the overall picture must include the HEU. He said a couple things. First of all was a flat denial that they ever had a program, don't have a program, and then said that that's a topic that they certainly were willing to talk about once the United States sat down with them.

But he went further in his denial in terms of the clarity of it, saying that not only do we not have any program, we have no equipment and we don't have any scientists, we never had any scientists trained in that area, we rely on the natural uranium and the plutonium program that they have.

My point to Vice Minister Kim and to others there, it really didn't matter to the United States whether they admitted or not. That was not why at the time the U.S. took action. They did that based upon reliable information that we had about the program. So the question of whether they admitted or did not admit to the program really probably was not of great concern to the U.S. side, but this is some of the clearest denials that we have heard in the past year or so.

You may recall that on the 9th of December the North Koreans initially offered to freeze their nuclear facilities. They made that--they reissued that proposal I think the day before we went into North Korea. Vice Minister Kim's point in this was

we recognize this is not the endgame, but quite clearly there has to be some initial steps; and this, from their point of view, was a flexible offer on their part to get things moving.

I took an opportunity to tell Vice Minister Kim that, unfortunately, they had packaged that, in my opinion as a private citizen, in a way that was probably unacceptable to the U.S.; that is, they asked for the removal from the terrorism list; they asked for the removal of the remaining sanctions; and they also demanded an energy package, a return of the heavy fuel oil that had been provided by the Agreed Framework set-up that ...oversees.

My point to him was that these were not related to the immediate problem. Whether or not that sunk in, I don't know, but we noticed in the last couple of days in their discussion of the freeze proposal, they have quit talking about what they want in return from it.

Now, that doesn't mean that they are not going to ask for something, but nonetheless it's a point I would make in terms of the ability to have a conversation with the North Koreans and perhaps it have some possible good.

The North Koreans, particularly Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan, is somewhat miffed and bemused by the inability to have a conversation with the United States. He cited as an example where they had passed some information to the United States in October and later through the New York channel--this is the North Koreans' UN mission in New York--to the U.S. and never received a response. But sometime later, I believe in early December or mid-December, the U.S. had some questions that they wanted to ask of the North Koreans and, rather than submit those to this established contact, provided these questions to the Chinese. From a North Korean point of view, they said they had nothing to do with the six-party talk in terms of its agenda or the logistics and were quite miffed that these comments and questions had gone to the Chinese to be passed to the North Koreans and still don't understand why there cannot be a legitimate discussion, even if it's within the context of six-party or some other format.

Let me move on then to probably what you're actually interested in and what I'm going to talk least about, and that is the visit to Yongbyon. And, again, let me point out that we had no illusions as to what we were doing and what was happening. One, we didn't go as an inspection team. The North Koreans didn't invite us to do that. We went simply as invited to observe what they chose to show us. So we were able to see some things, and there were other things we were not able to see.

We told the North Koreans in advance that we would only report back on what we saw. We would draw no conclusions.

Of interest to me was at the end of this, when we went back to Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan and laid out for him exactly what we had done, what we had seen, what we had not seen, what we could not conclude, his comment to us was: Just report exactly what you have seen. Do not attempt to shade in any way what you have

seen to avoid any potential negative reaction in the United States that will make the situation worse. Just simply tell the truth. Factual things tend to clarify.

I was encouraged by that comment, but nonetheless we do understand that the North Koreans had an objective in mind to allow us to see these things. You may recall through press reporting over the past year that the North Koreans have consistently in advance told us, the United States, and then later publicly, what they intended to do with their nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. To begin with, they were going to ask the IAEA inspectors to leave. They were going to unseal the seals, remove the cameras, restart the reactor, remove the spent fuel rods, reprocess them.

At one point they came back and said: We initially intended to reprocess the spent fuel rods for safety reasons, but now, because of the hostile U.S. policy, we are going to do that to extract plutonium to make a nuclear deterrent.

Now, with that as a basis, what they allowed us to do was to travel by car to Yongbyon, about an hour-and-45-minute trip, the last 30 minutes or so on unpaved roads. We met with the director of the center. We were able to go to several places. We went to the five-megawatt reactor. It was operational at the time. We went to the spent fuel pond storage facility. This is where the 8,017 or so spent fuel rods had been canned and safeguarded by the IAEA until a year ago in December. And then we toured the reprocessing facilities.

About the only piece of information that I will give you today--and the rest I really do need to reserve for Dr. Hecker because he is, clearly, far better prepared to give you all the details of what it will--and it will all be made public. The spent fuel facility, the spent fuel storage pond was empty. There are no spent fuel rods there.

You may recall that these were in canisters manufactured by the United States. Those canisters were empty. The pond contained no spent fuel rods, and the North Koreans told us they had moved them out on a regular basis for reprocessing in the reprocessing facility.

So, with that, let me just end my initial comments, if I may.

MR. STEINBERG: Let me just ask you one question.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: I didn't think I'd get away with this.

MR. STEINBERG: It's speculative, Jack. But, on the one hand, they clearly were trying to send a signal that they were moving forward with the plutonium program. On the other hand, as you pointed out, very strong denials about the HEU program.

What's your sense about why they're making this--having sort of--wanting to give the impression that they have an active nuclear program, why would they make the distinction between these two? And what conclusions are you drawing?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: The difficult problem here is with the HEU. Clearly, the United States, through its intelligence program, believes the North Koreans do have an HEU program. I was there in October. I heard what I heard. I'd seen the intelligence. I cannot comment on that now other than to say that, in contrast to the intelligence picture that developed some five-plus years ago about the possibility of a secret nuclear facility at Kun Chan Nee (ph), for which I was skeptical, I was not skeptical of the intelligence. I believed that it was accurate.

So, for me, there is a problem here, there is a contradiction that the North Koreans have a secret HEU program on the one hand, but they are being as transparent as they can.

They did make a comment, and for what it's worth in terms of wanting to clarify the situation and making a contrast, saying that in the case of Libya and Iran, both initially said, no, we don't have a WMD program, and the U.S. said, yes, you do. And he said in this case we're saying, yes, we do have a WMD program; the United States is saying, no, you don't.

[Laughter.]

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: So I'm not quite sure, other than it goes to--you know, you can speculate it as an example. The North Koreans have watched very carefully the activities of the U.S. in Afghanistan and removal of the Taliban and the activities that began in terms of combat in March in Iraq. And they have a genuine concern about the United States and want the United States to believe that they have a deterrent capability in the form of a nuclear weapons program.

MR. STEINBERG: Thanks, Jack.

Richard, how have the Chinese been reacting to these recent developments? How does this affect their strategy for moving forward on the negotiations?

MR. BUSH: Chinese diplomats were in Russia last week, and in Washington just this week. They have been working for the last five months or so to reconvene the six-party talks. And it appears based on recent developments that they will reconvene sometime next month.

It should be said, however, that this reflects a retreat of sorts for China. China had set a goal for the second meeting of reaching an agreed statement on the North Korea nuclear problem, a statement that all parties concerned would associate

themselves with. And their diplomats are shuttled between Pyongyang and Washington and other places to try to get consensus on that agreement.

In the end, the United States and North Korea could not find a set of words that would overcome their profound substantive differences and corrosive mutual mistrust. So China signaled a couple of weeks ago that the talks should proceed even if a statement was not possible at this time.

I think this is a worthwhile effort on the part of China. Maybe they were premature in trying to push for a statement at this time. There will be some kind of statement of principles needed, so I don't think that this effort will be in vain.

More disturbing, I think, from my point of view are suggestions that China is skeptical of the United States approach on certain key points. It has publicly called on Washington to make concessions. It reportedly no longer accepts U.S. claims about North Korea's highly enriched uranium program to create fissile material. And China has welcome North Korea's proposal to freeze its plutonium program, and it sees this as a good step, a good first step, one that the United States should welcome, not spurn.

From the administration's point of view, of course, the existence of the HEU program is the reason not to accept a freeze, and it worries that freezing the plutonium program will be all that happens, that this will be the last step, not the first step.

I think such divergences between Washington and Beijing are to be expected. This is a very complicated and tough issue. They're not the end of the world. They can be worked out. I think the key point here is that China, for its own national security and foreign policy interests, has taken on an unprecedented role in trying to solve a really tough problem. This is an innovation in Chinese foreign policy, and it is one that the United States rightly welcomes.

MR. STEINBERG: Richard, there are a lot of people around town who believe that the administration is expecting China to make sure that North Korea doesn't do anything provocative as this rather slow [inaudible] plays out. What are the Chinese expectations about what their role is? And how do you see their interaction with the North Koreans right now in terms of managing the North Korean side of the equation?

MR. BUSH: I don't know sort of the nature of those conversations, but I think that China understands very well the need to encourage North Korean restraint. They see the divisions in our policy and that there are people in our government who are just waiting for the North Koreans to do something provocative because that will play into their hands.

I think, on the other hand, they believe very sincerely that there are limits to their leverage over Kim Jong-Il, that they can persuade but not pressure. And this puts them at odds with Washington a little bit.

MR. STEINBERG: Sook-Jong, I can't imagine that the South Korean press has paid any attention to these recent developments. I know how shy and reserved they are. What is the reaction in Seoul? How have they viewed Ambassador Pritchard's and his group's trip? And what does this mean for the South Korean Government strategy towards North Korea?

MS. LEE: This visit that Jack has been reporting has been one of the top news stories in Seoul, and but with the limited knowledge about this, you know, what this--about the Korean media is reporting as a matter of fact, and then, of course, there is like a brief summary of what they see because, as Jack has just reported, they are afraid North Korea is going to show selectively, and also they were skeptical about the influence of this team, this visit, because they don't represent government. But I guess Jack has been very highly respected, especially among the liberal groups in Korea -- Korea elites. So I bet that they would expect this visit, and they believe they can influence the Bush administration will lead to make certain concessions to Bush administration or to engage more seriously with North Korea.

MR. STEINBERG: The South Korean Government, what reactions have they had?

MS. LEE: I haven't heard official statement about this particular visit because they are more busy with the current resignation of Foreign Minister Yun. So I think, as you may know, there have been diverging, growing issues of North Korea and also the alliance with the USA, and these issues are dividing Korean society and also Korean elites, including bureaucratic officials. So that is very disturbing, and if I just quote two polls--and I thought, you know, anti-American sentiment will be controlled. But two polls are actually revealing that the delayed settlement of North Korea nuclear crisis is aggravating already negative public opinion toward USA, and this New Year poll by JoongAng Daily is telling that half of Koreans want the South Korean Government to play the intermediating role between USA and North Korea, and the remaining half is divided, too, to two groups. One group favors the South Korean government alliance with the USA to be priority, while the other half, meaning the quarter of the total respondents, are thinking South Korean Government should cooperate more with the North Korean Government. I am disturbed more by the Chosun Daily poll and saying that 39 percent of South Koreans conceive of the USA as the biggest threatening country. That is leading the answer of 33 percent who chose North Korea. But it is very disturbing to report that how my country considers its ally, the USA, as the biggest threat.

MR. STEINBERG: And on the six-party talks, what has the reaction been to the failure to reach an agreement up until now on a communiqué and a decision perhaps to go forward with the talks without any predetermined outcome?

MS. LEE: I think, you know, at the beginning of Roh-Moo hyun government, six-party talks wasn't that welcomed by the South Korean Government because they thought USA administration is trying to avoid serious engagement by making this talk with North Korea to a multilateral framework. But as time goes on, I guess South Korean Government began to see its role in multilateral talks. South Korean negotiators are carving their role as mediating and facilitating communication. So in doing so, just putting some restraints to two parties of the U.S. and North Korea, taking the drastic step. And, of course, they are disappointed about this delayed settlement, but the Korean Government is trying to coordinate, of course, terms of mediator role or coordinator role. This so-called mediating role taken by South Korean government would upset the American officials who expect closer cooperation from its ally. But that's true that many--the key officials in...portraying their role in this fashion.

MR. STEINBERG: Any other comments or observations before we turn to the questions?

MS. LEE: I would like to take the opportunity to report how serious this North Korean issue is dividing the South Korean public, and also it is developing into the opinion toward the alliance with the USA. USA has been the key ally of South Korea, but all these recent events and incidents, like the killing of two school girls and also this relocation of the American troops and also dispatching Korean troops to Iraq, many Koreans began to perceive the USA as very threatening and unilateral. So I think that there is very dangerously [inaudible] dangerous development in South Korean society, a decline in public support for the alliance and growing doubts in believing the U.S. commitment to South Korea.

MR. STEINBERG: Thank you very much.

Well, let's now turn to your questions. I can't imagine that there are any out there.

Why don't we start with you right here? Once you get the microphone, which will come quickly to you, if you could introduce yourself before you ask your question.

MR. GOODBY: Thank you. I'm Jim Goodby, a non-resident senior fellow at Brookings. A question for Ambassador Pritchard. There was a media report, which you may not want to comment on in light of what you just said, but the report stated that you had been shown a piece of metal that the North Koreans described as separated plutonium. You can avoid that if you'd like to, but if you have any comment, it would be of some interest.

My question which I know you will answer is what was said about something that figures so prominently in the discussions in Washington, but you didn't mention so far, and that is the idea of some kind of security assurances to North Korea.

That seemed to have been something they wanted rather badly, and you did not mention that it even came up, which would support the thesis that this is kind of a throw-away position for them, not something they take too seriously. So if you could comment on one or the other of those, I'd appreciate it. Thank you.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Thank you for the opportunity to choose.

[Laughter.]

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Let me just address the first one in the sense that Dr. Hecker just in five days from now--and let me give you a sense of this.

One, not only is he the former director of Los Alamos, he is a nuclear scientist, he is a metallurgist. So all of these things he fully understands. When it comes to any of the aspects that have to do with science, I'm simply, you know, a bystander. I see things that were shown to me, but he has done a preliminary briefing to some key people in the Department of Energy. I was with him when he did that. He spent the first 45 minutes telling them why he wasn't going to tell them all of this because he needed an opportunity to put everything into context in terms of what he did see, what he didn't see, conclusions that he could or could not draw. And then when he finally got around to telling them what it is that we did, it took him an hour and 15 minutes, and that was the short version.

So for me to say yes or no, it just is absolutely irresponsible on my part. Given that Dr. Hecker is going to testify, he will give this information in public information. It will all be known. And then if by chance anybody has a question for me that Dr. Hecker was unable to answer, I'll be more than happy to speculate. But before that, I'm going to avoid that.

On the question of security assurances, what I sensed was from the North Koreans that security is absolutely an important aspect of what they need to do to move beyond where they are now in terms of the reforms that they'd like to take place, in terms of relationships they'd like to develop with South Korea and Japan. And they view these really as impossible without getting beyond the current state of affairs with the United States, and primary among that is a security assurance.

But they are absolutely unthrilled about the prospect of a multilateral security assurance. I don't think we fully know or appreciate what it is about that that they don't like.

Now, they've said in their own writings that it didn't make any sense to them, that they already have a security alliance with Russia and China. Those are not threats to them, so why do they need this developed? But I think there's an area here that needs a further exploration to understand what it is that the North Koreans do or do not want.

There is, however, in my opinion, a tactical element here where the North Koreans, in preparation for eventual discussions with the United States, are increasing the value of the freeze that they have put out there, at the same time attempting to decrease the value of what the United States is potentially prepared to offer in terms of a multilateral security guarantee.

So part of that is posturing, and we recognize that. Some of this is--we just don't fully understand what it is that might be acceptable or unacceptable to the North Koreans. But it did come up. As I mentioned, I had some nine hours here, and I certainly can't go through all of that all at once. But it's a good point and thanks for bringing it up.

MS. SLAVIN: Barbara Slavin of USA Today. Welcome back. There was some confusion about the status of your trip, and I wonder if you could clarify the nature of the approvals that you had to get from the U.S. Government in order to go, the kinds of consultations that Hecker had with the Department of Energy--I believe he's still on contract with them--in order to be able to go, and whether you saw yourself as filling a vacuum in direct contacts between the two governments with at least the tacit approval of a good part of the Bush administration.

Thank you.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Parts of this you will best get from other people, but from my perspective, first, as I said, this is a trip that originated with John Lewis in a true sense of track two from a U.S. point of view. From a North Korean point of view, it's a little difficult to have track two when they don't have the corresponding mechanisms to have a track two. So you end up with kind of a track one-and-a-half where you have private citizens, academics, scientists, congressional aides, going to North Korea and ending up talking with officials that are the same officials that talk to the United States.

But in terms of the approval and whether it had the tacit approval of the U.S. Government or not, that part you'll have to ask the U.S. Government. I didn't proceed under the sense that this had the tacit approval of the U.S. Government. Dr. Hecker, because he is still a fellow at the Los Alamos, still holds security clearances, was required and did seek permission from the Department of Energy, which provided that for him to go.

Two other people that were on this from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff--Keith Luce, who is an assistant to Senator Lugar, and Frank Jannuzi, who provides assistance to Senator Biden--they were traveling under the auspices of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. They had to seek their own permission, not the U.S. Government.

There was some spillover in that three of them--Dr. Hecker, Jannuzi, and Luce--each all had the country clearances, the approval of the Ambassador in Beijing, because that's where we had to transit in there. So from that sense, there was a requirement to get that travel permit to go. There was not in advance some type of message or anything that could be construed as semi-unofficial or otherwise. We went to great pains in talking with the North Koreans to make sure that they understand that this was not a wink and a nod, that we're truly a private organization trip. And I think most of us in the conversations with the North Koreans were cognizant of this and found ourselves probably far too often than not starting our conversations by saying, "Well, as a private citizen," trying to emphasize that point.

There was no confusion on the North Koreans' part as to what we were. They did certainly understand that we would be providing this information back to the U.S. Government, as responsible citizens would, and most of us already have, and others will be doing so in the near term.

MS. LAVOTT: Thank you. Elise Lavott, CNN. I guess it's a little scary to try and get into the mind of the North Koreans, but you've talked to them a lot more than most of us. And I'm just wondering what your kind of assessment of what the North Korean endgame really is. Are they fully intent on developing a full-flown nuclear weapon and just playing for time and plan on declaring themselves a nuclear power? Or is this just, you know, the kind of brinkmanship that we've come to expect from North Korea and they're just playing it out to get as much as they can? Or is it a combination of both?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: I'm assuming that's addressed to me.

I have for the last year fully believed that the North Koreans have already made a final decision that they would be pursuing and developing a nuclear weapons program. That's not to say they could not be deterred from doing that or they might not be willing to give up what they have in exchange for an endgame relationship with the United States.

It was clear to me in this visit that they are still of the mind that it is more important than not to develop a relationship with the United States, and in that regard, they are prepared at this point to give up their nuclear weapons program. It is a complex issue. In the HEU we've talked about before, it really isn't on the table for discussion yet. It needs to be there. It can't be half-measures. They understand that. But I'm also still convinced after this visit that if this does not work, they will continue down the process and the path that they have chosen.

You know, as an example, Kim Kye-Gwan said to me, "Time is not on the U.S. side. The lapse of time"--these are direct quotes. "The lapse of time will result in the quantitative and qualitative increase in our nuclear deterrent."

You know, are they bluffing? No, I don't think so. I think it's somewhat matter of fact. But they certainly are using that to their advantage in what they see to be upcoming talks and eventual negotiations in whatever context with the United States.

MR. STEINBERG: Did you discuss the issue of inspections with them and what they would or wouldn't be prepared to do by way of inspections?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: On this trip, we did not go into depth in terms of what they would be prepared to do. I think what Kim Kye-Gwan may have alluded to early in was by allowing us to go, there was some sense that the U.S. would see a willingness on their part to allow, during a freeze or dismantlement process, the U.S. and others to be there. But we did not go into it. We were not there to negotiate, and we were kind of careful to make sure that we did not try to represent potential U.S. interests and what would or would not be acceptable. So it was an area we didn't get into.

MR. STROBEL: Orrin Strobel (ph) with Knight-Ridder Newspapers. Two quick questions. Other than your own eyes and ears, were you allowed to bring any sorts of devices for measuring, cameras, anything like that? I understand you're not on an inspection mission, but if the North Koreans want to send a signal, it would seem to me that they would want you to get the signal.

And, secondly, can you just flesh out a little bit more what they said about the war in Iraq and the impact on them? Obviously, they're concerned that the United States might do likewise to them, but I'm curious whether they also kind of see the United States as tied down in the Middle East right now and not able to threaten military force, even if it wanted to.

Thank you.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Let me address the last first. No, they did not go into any extensive discussion other than the cryptic reference to Libya, Iran, and the timing and what the U.S. was doing. They did not talk in terms of the U.S. is tied down, therefore we don't expect they'll be able to attack. None of that was there on this set of conversations.

In terms of recording this, all of us had cameras, which they said: You're free to take pictures wherever you want, except at Yongbyon. And for most of the part, when they would say, yes, you can take pictures, then they'd turn around and say, Well, not there. But nonetheless they had their own still and motion-picture camera of all of our visit to the nuclear facilities for which we have asked for copies of, trying to split the hair here, saying, yes, you've told us that your regulations don't permit us to take photographs, but since you did, would you provide us a copy of yours? Somehow I don't think we'll get those, but nonetheless--and to finish that, no, we had no measuring devices of any kind. As you mentioned, it certainly was not an inspection. You know,

with the exception of in the person of Dr. Hecker, you know, a walking tool himself, we had no other devices.

MR. ENSOR: David Ensor, again, of CNN. Ambassador Pritchard, two questions. First of all, in your nine hours of talking with the Vice Minister, did he make--did he clarify at all what they would be willing to do to prove to the United States that they don't have an HEU program? Will they let the United States satisfy itself that they don't have an HEU program?

And, secondly, just to push back a little, I don't understand why you can't tell us whether the North Koreans showed you something that they say is reprocessed plutonium. Never mind what Dr. Hecker thinks it was, did they show you something that they said was reprocessed plutonium?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: I do appreciate the last question. I had an extended conversation with Dr. Hecker last night. All of us on the delegation came to the same conclusion. In terms of as a spokesman for the group, the credibility of Dr. Hecker in terms of others of us who may be ascribed to have motivations, you know, it is best for him to do it.

You know, I can answer the question. Simply I am just choosing not to now. I would ask that you let Dr. Hecker very fully explain this. He will. He'll do it in detail. He'll answer your questions. And then I certainly will give you my own opinions after that.

In terms of proving the HEU, the only thing that--I had a private conversation--not with Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan, with somebody else, who--and somebody else has said this to me, another North Korean, but not on this trip. The equivalent of "You tell us where it is, and we'll let you go see it."

My response, again, as a private citizen, was: That's the Iraq model, and I have no doubt the U.S. is not interested in that. This is something that the North Koreans are going to have to clarify for the U.S. It is not a hunt-and-peck situation.

Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan did say, you know, "How is it that we can prove that we don't have something that we don't have?" I mean, those are his words. But other than that, there was not any clarification of how that might come about.

MR. : You said that they didn't mention Iraq much, but either in this or any other conversations that you've had, have they mentioned the Iraq inspections regime? Do they see that either as a bad or a potential model?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: I would have to go back to a previous life some three or four years ago, particularly when we were having initial discussions about Kun Chan Nee and how we were going to go about doing that.

Throughout that discussion--and those were a set of discussions that lasted over eight months that resulted in the U.S. being able to have access. We called them visits, but they were absolutely inspections, with U.S. military personnel in civilian clothes, with measuring devices. They went on two occasions with the authority to go back if we weren't satisfied after that.

But throughout those conversations, the North Koreans kept referencing Iraq and saying, you know, we're not going to be like Iraq, we're not going to have you all over our country poking your head in every hole that we have, because we've got a lot of them.

MR. HATHAWAY: Bob Hathaway, Wilson Center. Jack, just to clarify something, I heard you say that in October of '02, you were convinced that U.S. intelligence on the HEU program was solid. Has anything transpired since then that lessens your confidence in the reliability of that information?

And, moreover, we apparently have not persuaded the Chinese about this. I gather that the Japanese and the South Koreans also are agnostic on it. What might we do, if you continue to believe in the solid nature of this intelligence, what would you recommend that we do to get our other partners on board on this key issue?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: This is a key element, I believe, in resolving the HEU problem. Nothing has changed since I was first introduced to the intelligence and information about the HEU program, and clearly I have not had access to any additional information over the last four and a half months. I don't backtrack on what I believed I heard in October, nor have I been changing my mind about the validity of the information. I continue to believe that they do have an HEU program.

In terms of how do we convince others who are skeptical, and as Richard pointed out, and others, the Chinese certainly don't believe this, and there is a good deal of skepticism on behalf of--on the part of other allies as well. It goes to a problem that we had with Kun Chan Nee, and that is, the intelligence community, rightly to a degree, protects the information they have, both for reasons of the sources and the methods that we're all familiar with, but the inability to provide some level of information, either to the party that you're accusing or to your allies that you want to bring on board, is a huge disadvantage and ultimately is a disservice in trying to resolve the problem.

I would firmly recommend that the DCI take a personal look at this and be able to modify some of the restrictions that would allow us to share first and foremost with our allies--Japan and South Korea--the bulk of the material, and to whatever limited degree we can with the Chinese, and to the point necessary, even to the North Koreans, to get this thing resolved in a more timely fashion.

MR. STEINBERG: Could I just ask Richard and Sook-Jong whether you think in the case of either South Korea or China they really want to know, and whether it

isn't more convenient for their purposes to be able to say, well, we don't really know the answer to that?

MS. LEE: I guess South Korean Government is also skeptical. That's a good word. They are, I'm not sure about the HEU program, like China. But I think whether they have this program or not isn't that important because whatever kind of nuclear capacity they have, it's not actually building additional threat to South Korea because South Korea is vulnerable to conventional weapons of North Korea. So, I mean, I guess the majority of the South Koreans believe this nuclear program is actually a negotiation card to get in a dialogue and to normalize with the USA and while they are getting the security guarantee. So it doesn't matter--I think it's better to solve this nuclear crisis as soon as possible because--not because there's any invasion possibility or threat from the North to the South, but because that is damaging U.S.-Korea alliance. North Korea's nuclear issues are driving a wedge between two allies that is most troubling thing.

MR. BUSH: On the issue of the HEU program, if China takes a sort of "see no evil" approach to it, it threatens to undermine their whole effort. If they seek to focus the negotiating discussions on the plutonium program, there is a danger, I think, that the whole mediation effort on their part will come to a grinding halt because the U.S. will lose confidence. And there's a danger that the United States and China could be in a kind of basic disagreement over why the process failed. We will blame Beijing, and Beijing will blame us.

So they may not want to know, but they will be more successful in this effort if they sort of accept it and take it on. But I agree with Jack that so that we can help them sort of clarify the situation for themselves.

MR. WINDER: Joe Winder, Korea Economic Institute. Richard, I want to ask you about the Chinese view on having started this process, do you think they regret having seized this hot potato? And are they now looking for a way to get out of it, say wrap this thing up and then say it didn't work and it's the U.S. fault? Or are they--how committed are they to taking this as far and as long as it takes to get some sort of outcome that's reasonably satisfactory?

MR. BUSH: It's a good question. I think at this point that they remain committed to the process. This is important in terms of sort of China's own national interest because if the North Korea situation spins out of control, it will spin across the border into China. So they have a real reason to do everything they can to bring a good result.

I think that this also appeals to China in terms of what it says about China's role in the world as a responsible great power, which is also in their interest.

So, this has been a modest setback, not being able to get this agreement, but I think that they're going to push on for a while.

MR. RIVALL: Thank you. Artie Rivall (ph), ABC News. You talked a little bit a while ago, Ambassador Pritchard--

MR. STEINBERG: Can you speak a little bit louder and get closer to the mike?

MR. : You talked about the spent fuel rod pond, and there is a debate about how many of the rods they've actually reprocessed. At some point I think the North Koreans said they had reprocessed all of the thousands of spent fuel rods. You said that they had moved them to a reprocessing center. Do you know how many of the rods they have moved to the reprocessing center? And did they tell you how many rods they've actually reprocessed?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Let me try to answer part of that, and the larger picture Dr. Hecker is going to go through from A to Z on that.

What I said was that the rods were no longer there. I did not say they moved them to the reprocessing facility.

Now, the North Koreans did say that. They have told us previously in an official capacity that that's what they had done. They reiterated to this group that was there that they began reprocessing in mid-January of a year ago, and they completed the reprocessing in June of this past year.

You know, I mentioned early on--and that's why it's important that Dr. Hecker go through all of this. We saw some things and we did not see some things.

Now, you know, I'm going beyond where I want to here, but I can't tell you where those rods are. I didn't see where they went. So for me to speculate that, in fact, they were reprocessed or they were taken out and hidden someplace, I can't do that. I can tell you that they are not--I can guarantee you they are not in that spent fuel pond.

MR. OBERDORFER: Don Oberdorfer. This a follow-up to your conversation with Kim Kye-Gwan about time. Do you get the impression that they are now attaching less urgency to a solution of this problem than had been--than they have attached in the past, that maybe they are content to let this ball be kicked down the road past November, hoping maybe that President Bush is not re-elected or that something else will happen in the meantime, they'll go on producing plutonium? And I just wonder, out of your past experience, your own assessment of their degree of urgency or lack of it.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: There was no mention of the election in terms of waiting to see. Not on this trip, but with a previous conversation with another North Korean in October, they were saying that it was their expectation that President

Bush would probably be re-elected, and they certainly were not holding their breath and waiting for a change in the administration to take place.

In terms of the urgency, I actually was--I did not anticipate that I would have the kind of conversations with Kim Kye-Gwan that focused on resolution, peaceful discussion, that I thought there would be more of the, well, if you don't want to talk, then so be it. But there was more focus on we would like to get this done, we don't want to waste our time, we'd like to take a first step, we know we can't go to the endgame now.

So there was some practical discussion there that actually focused on doing it. But there was not any sense of urgency about this. You know, again I go back to what they said then and what we have seen in other writings by North Koreans as well that simply is trying to point out to the U.S., time is not on your side. As time goes by, we are increasing our arsenal, is their message.

MS. : Carol [inaudible].

MR. STEINBERG: Can you just wait for the mike, Carol?

MS. : You said the five-megawatt reactor was operating. What about the reprocessing facility?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Again, this part of the discussion Dr. Hecker will go into. I'll simply say the reprocessing center was not functioning. They said they had completed there, so there's no expectation there was anything going on there. But the five-megawatt was operational.

MR. MITCHELL: Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. Ambassador Pritchard, I was struck by your characterization of Pyongyang in January of 2004 versus earlier visits.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Right.

MR. MITCHELL: Particularly the activity that you saw in the streets and in the markets. And that prompts for me these questions:

What factors do you think domestically account for that? What conclusions, if any, do you draw about what that might mean about change in this country? And, third, and perhaps most importantly, are there implications there for future diplomatic efforts with this regime?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: All good points. As I was trying to point out, this is all relative. So as I go back some years in--I don't know whether it was February '97 or some point like that. When you go through the streets of Pyongyang and there's no traffic, there's the occasional official immediately old Mercedes that's driving

around, and you look at an apartment building in the early evening and you see one light bulb on.

You know, this trip there were lights everywhere in all of the apartments. They just had, in relative terms, a more vibrant look to it.

What I can't do is to say that the reform activities that were begun in July of 2002 are attributable to this. I don't know that. I mean, there are other people far better equipped, Marcus Nolan for one, that can give you the economic side of why this is happening. But as I said, I had heard reports over the last year of people coming in, and I was interested in that because there is the occasional misperception that Pyongyang and North Korea is tottering on the brink of collapse and all we have to do is wait and they're just going to go away. Well, the trend line is in the opposite direction. So if you're expecting North Korea on its own to implode for the lack of infrastructure, support kind of activities in the only city that counts, don't wait. It's not going to happen, at least any time soon.

In terms of the implication, I mean, clearly there are--you know, for a couple of things. If this takes root, if this one Tong-Il(ph) street market expands in other places, you're going to get a sense of entitlement by people that they're not going to walk away from easily. It is an expectation that the regime must meet in trying to find better goods and better services, all of which can be exploited in terms of bringing it to more rational behavior.

So there is something to be exploited here because of the trends that are occurring.

MR. STEINBERG: I'd just observe, Jack, as a historian that in some ways the North Korean Government faces a dilemma, because if it doesn't reform, it has the problem of continued impoverishment of people. If it does open up, it has the problem that revolutions tend to happen when expectations begin to rise.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Right.

MR. STEINBERG: And so it may well be that it's not going to implode in kind of the sense--the very unsophisticated view that it would only implode if things got worse, but actually, these new dynamics could be creating a problem.

MR. FERACCI: Hi, Ambassador. Matthew Feracci (ph), New River Media. I just had a quick question. Do you think--did you detect any significant change in the tone of your conversations? I mean, is this a kinder, gentler DPRK?

[Laughter.]

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Now, the problem with my answer is that you've got to put into perspective of how the North Koreans view this delegation.

They've known John Lewis since 1987. You know, they--I'm a known quantity to them. They wanted us to walk away with an impression. So it was open. It was as cordial as you can be with North Koreans. You know, so--was it gentler, kinder? Yes, but, you know, on their terms.

I'll give you one example. We did have a meeting with a Korean People's Army, KPA, General Li Chong Bo (ph), who is the guy in charge of the DMZ, he's been there for about 800 years. But--well, maybe not.

[Laughter.]

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: But in the past, they have trotted him out to give the KPA hard line to the visiting Americans. You know, fire and brimstone, you know, shape up or we, the KPA, can shape you up ourselves.

That didn't happen. I mean, it was far milder than I would have anticipated. So in that respect, I mean, they were playing to the audience that they had, so you cannot take that and say this means that they are a kinder and gentler society now.

MR. BROWN: David Brown with SEIS (ph). thank you very much for everything you've shared with us, Jack. This is a question for you again. What, if anything, did they say about their economic relations with the South? It strikes me that that may be another area in which time is on their side, that they've got a government in Seoul that's going to move ahead with economic cooperation projects, the [inaudible] zone, the railways and so forth, regardless of what happens, it seems, in the North Korean nuclear talks. Could you address that?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: That one I really can't in the sense that we didn't have a good discussion on that. There were a couple of meetings at the very end in which Mr. Luce and Mr. Jannuzi went off and had some separate conversations, and they may have covered that more.

There was the implication in the one-hour session that we had with their Committee on Promotion of International Trade that implied that in terms of, you know, increased trade, in their words saying that, you know, in the past we've gotten these contracts for, you know, magnesium, lead, zinc, et cetera, and we really couldn't fill them; and now we're beginning to be able to fill those contracts.

So there was implication of that, but there was not a direct discussion about it.

MR. NELSON: Thank you. Chris Nelson of the Nelson Report. A question for Jack primarily. We've been talking a lot about what you saw and did there. Is it possible to talk about what you've done since you got back? Have you had time to brief the National Security Council? Have you had time to talk to the Vice President's

office? Have you talked to people at the State Department? How have they received your assessments of North Korean excitement about or willingness to negotiate? Have you detected any movement in what has been seen by many here as a continued stalemate or sense of paralysis in going that last mile and developing a road map, for example, or whatever you might want to call that? If you could fill us in a bit on what's been going on since you got back.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Just factually, Chris, I provided a very limited initial piece of information to the State Department, to the Secretary's office very quickly, just in case those of you in the media had gotten the story and I certainly did not want the Secretary to be blindsided by reading about what we had done before he knew about it.

Now, after that, I spent an hour and a half yesterday at the State Department discussing my trip in some detail. I have not talked to anyone else in the government. As I mentioned earlier, Dr. Hecker has provided an initial couple of hours' feedback to the Department of Energy, specifically to provide to Secretary Abraham, who was traveling in Beijing at the time. I know that the two congressional aides have given some limited information back and are on their way back now, having stopped in Seoul.

It is John Lewis' intention to provide a very thorough--he takes incredibly detailed notes and will be providing all of those to key people in the Department of State for complete circulation as needed. And you notice I didn't pick up on your ask for speculation.

MS. : Katie [inaudible] from Institute for Defense Analysis. First of all, I'm glad that you went, so welcome back. Nine hours' discussion with the good old Kim Kye-Gwan seems to be a very important opportunity, and he surely indicated their country's resolution to deal with this issue with the United States directly.

During that nine hours' discourse, did Mr. Kim offer you or indicate what's the price tag? I think that's the bottom of the issue between the tug of war. And if he did so, could we get the list of what he wanted from us?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: No, Katie, he did not indicate what the price tag was. As I had mentioned earlier, in their public offering of this freeze, they did put a price tag on that, on those three items, for which I criticized Vice Minister Kim on. But in terms of what you're asking in terms of a final price tag from their point of view, it didn't come up. He didn't offer it, and we certainly were not going to ask him.

MR. STEINBERG: A couple more questions, and, Joe, if I can let you take the last one question, but I'll take two or three more before we go there.

MR. RICH: Bob Rich, retired Foreign Service. Jack, two questions.

First, you--it depends on your long association with the problem multilaterally. How would you judge whether the divergence between South Korea and ourselves on this problem, how serious it is? I assume you're not taking responsibility for the Foreign Minister being retired right after your visit. But would you comment more broadly than that perhaps as to whether you think this is a very serious divergence over time?

Secondly, a very quick factual question. Did anyone on your visit make a claim to you that they, North Korea, that they have resumed work on the 100-megawatt or 200-megawatt reactors?

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Reversing that order, they did not make any claim about the 200. As you know, when they first began to say they were going to restart their activities, they indicated they would resume activities at both the 50-megawatt and the 200-megawatt reactor. There was no discussion about the 200-megawatt reactor while we were on our trip.

You know, your first question is far more difficult, and Jim will be able probably to discuss that more thoroughly. But the atmosphere around the resignation of the South Korean Foreign Minister in terms of some of the criticisms that are being reported within the Foreign Ministry and a discord between the National Security Council, sounds awfully familiar to me.

[Laughter.]

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Do you want to add anything?

MS. LEE: The more I stay in D.C., I see much similarity between Seoul and Washington, D.C., because there are interagency conflicts and discord. I guess we can build up, you know, transnational alliance between the agencies, yes, of two governments. But although the despite the denial of [inaudible] and the President and key officials, there is a policy discord between Korea's Foreign Ministry and the NSC, and Korea's NSC team is surrounded by new leaders who tend to be--know about North Korea, so tend to be more sympathetic to what North Korea is wanting. And they are more like taking more independent foreign policy from the USA and criticizing the conventional elite bureaucrats to be [inaudible] who are kowtowing to the USA.

And, on the other hand, the Foreign Ministry and the embassy here are trying to work more realistic cooperation between two allies, and obviously that is leading to often the conflicts, and that is related to the resignation of Mr. Yun, although the incident was popped [inaudible] up by the scandal of high-level Foreign Ministry officials who criticized the present laws, USA policy, officially and informally.

So, of course, there is a part of disciplining high-level bureaucrats [inaudible] that you can understand, but at the same time, if you are trying to discipline too much, I guess the government officials in South Korea put their needs to be more

courageous if they want to criticize what [inaudible] is thinking are risking their own jobs in the government. I think that's a pity [inaudible].

Thank you.

MS. EFRON: Thanks. Sonni Efron with the Los Angeles Times. I wonder if you could respond to the perception by some in the administration that the whole trip, your trip, was unwelcome. The word "mischievous" was used. And the sense from some in the administration that if the North Koreans have something to say, they should come to the six-party talks and say them, and that you all shouldn't have given them a second--you know, an out, a sort of alternative way to communicate.

Also, when you first resigned, you called for the appointment of a special envoy. Now, there has been one appointed. Do you approve? Do you think at this stage it will help?

And, finally, your trip coincided with the decision to give more food aid by the U.S., and I wonder whether that was mentioned in your discussions. Were the North Korean officials, you know, grateful? Did they feel like it's their due? Did they even mention that?

Thank you.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: The latter part on the food aid, yes, Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan acknowledged that the U.S. was providing or had pledged an additional 60,000 tons, completing the original implied pledge of February a year ago of a total of 100,000 metric tons. He did express his appreciation for that.

When I called for a special envoy, I was not suggesting that you find somebody to replace me, but I was suggesting that you find somebody of the caliber of Bill Perry, who would be a special--a coordinator of U.S. policy, one who could step into the fray and bring the disparate views into a coherent policy that reflected the strategic vision of the President on how to resolve this. I still believe that that is a necessary element in dealing with North Korean policy.

With regard to criticism about the trip, I think, you know, just put on our oil slick and let it slide off and let others be the judge in terms of did it provide any opportunity to enhance the prospect for success in the next round of six-party talks. If so, that was what the objective was. If not, then, you know, sorry, and we'll try again.

MS. TOLBERT: Katherine Tolbert with the Washington Post. I assume since you didn't mention it that you did not meet with Kim Jong-Il, but I'd like to ask you if he was referred to in any way in any of the discussions, and if so, how, and what you would read into that.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: No, we didn't meet with Kim Jong-Il. The last time I've seen him was with Secretary Albright in October of 2000. Obviously I didn't stick in his mind as somebody important enough to come to the airport to meet on this last trip.

There was no substantive reference to him in this in terms of the potential for resolution or anything like that. There certainly was obligatory references to the leadership of the dear general on a couple of occasions, but it was not a prominent part of our conversation.

MR. STEINBERG: Joe?

MR. SNYDER: Thanks very much, Jim, for the opportunity for the last question.

Jack, as maybe a way of wrapping up the discussion this morning, you've talked a little bit about what your goals were in this trip. I wonder if you could elaborate on what you think the North Koreans' goals were in allowing the trip to come in and whether or not you think they accomplished what they set out to do.

Thank you.

AMBASSADOR PRITCHARD: Vice Minister Kim Kye-Gwan--there's a distinction of what they said their goals were and what they might have been. Their pronounced goal was to shed some clarity and transparency on that, and in that regard, that's a little bit consistent particularly with the Yongbyon visit and what they've attempted to do over the last year in announcing ahead of time each move that they made along the way.

But in terms of, you know, their other goals, I'm sure they wanted us to come back and emphasize their willingness to participate in six-party talks.

One of the things that the Vice Minister indicated, you know, in the negative, they did not want to be seen as the obstacle to six-party talks. They did not want to be seen as the party that is delaying, you know, setting the next round. They went out of their way to say it was, you know, the North Koreans who actually agreed to the date in December, et cetera.

So I think there's an element of, you know, self-defense involved here where they'd like us to come back and report things that shed positive light on them. But hopefully, you know, his comments with regard to what we saw at Yongbyon applied to the entire trip, and they'd be satisfied if we simply told the truth.

MR. STEINBERG: Once again, thanks to the Asia Society and all of you for a very stimulating morning.

[Applause.]