

**MEETINGS WITH AMBASSADOR LI GUN, DIRECTOR GENERAL
BUREAU OF ASIAN AFFAIRS (BAA)
DPRK MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
First Meeting, at the Ministry
0930-1130, Wednesday, Nov. 1, 2006**

Also present: BAA officials Kwon Jong Gun, Song Il Hyok; and Kim Hyon Chol

Li Gun, whom we have met many times before, began by saying: "You are arriving at a time of great celebration. The atmosphere is related to what has been done in the past. In January 2004 and in August last year, you visited our country. You have made the world understand the DPRK nuclear deterrent. The reason for allowing us to visit is to let the American public know that the people in the DPRK are full of confidence and pride and are marching forward.

"In the last two weeks, we hosted an ABC delegation. The delegation had interviews with our leaders and ordinary people. We allowed ABC to come at a critical time in order to let Americans know about how the North Korean people lead a normal life.

"Let me tell you the situation. We conducted a nuclear test on October 9. On October 3, we announced to the world that we would carry out a test. Why did we carry out the test? We carried out the test because of U.S. political pressure. Although we tested, our will to have denuclearization remains the same. I made clear to [ABC's] Diane Sawyer that as a country with nuclear weapons, it is quite natural to carry out a nuclear test. We still have the will to denuclearize. This test should have been not have been a shock or surprise to you.

"When Six-Party Talks are convened, the talks will proceed. Once the Six Party talks resume, discussions about denuclearization can proceed. We said that with sanctions, there would be no return to the talks. That position has not changed. With the tests [presumably meaning both the missile and nuclear tests], we have now our deterrent in the face of U.S. pressure.

"The Chinese side looks at the U.S. side with respect to the financial measures. But, Hill said that within the Talks, the Chinese would create a group on this. And, the U.S. and the DPRK would form a technical working group, and they would resolve this issue. They would not just talk and talk, but would resolve this issue in the near future. This was our understanding and the reason for the Foreign Ministry Statement on October 31, which said that the contacts in Beijing had been bilateral with the U.S. and the DPRK and multilateral.¹ We ourselves made the decision to return

¹ On November 1, KCNA published the statement entitled "Spokesman For DPRK Foreign Ministry On Resumption Of Six-Party Talks" (October 31, 2006). It said: "A spokesman for the DPRK Foreign Ministry gave the following answer to a question put by KCNA on Nov. 1 as regards the bilateral and multilateral contacts made in Beijing with main emphasis on the DPRK-U.S. contact: The DPRK recently took a self-defensive counter-measure against the U.S. daily increasing nuclear threat and financial sanctions against it.

"Bilateral and multi-lateral contacts took place in Beijing on Oct. 31 with main emphasis on the contact between the DPRK and the U.S.

"Discussed there were issues of seeking ways for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

"The DPRK decided to return to the Six-Party Talks on the premise that the issue of lifting financial sanctions will be discussed and settled between the DPRK and the U.S. within the framework of the Six-Party Talks."

IN CONFIDENCE

[to the Talks]. *But, at the moment, we do not consider that things will turn out OK* [Lewis emphasis at the time]. We will see how things turn out once the Six-Party Talks are reconvened. We will not consider the implementation of the Six-Party Talks under conditions of pressure.

“Chris Hill said that DPRK is committed to denuclearization and the U.S. to normalization. This will be a tough challenge. Both sides should move with confidence. We made concessions, but we are confident and full of pride.

“It is important for both sides to solve the financial sanctions issue. The two events will proceed in parallel: the Six-Party Talks and the technical group discussions. However, those discussions should not go on indefinitely. The breaking news is that Bush in DC was pleased with the Beijing talks. He used the outcome as an excuse to attack the Democrats when he appeared on CNN. He said we had returned to the Talks because of U.S. pressure. We say, if they want to say so, let them. Your analysts say that North Korea is sly and calculating and that things are working out in the way the North Koreans want.

“Although we conducted a nuclear test, our commitment to denuclearization remains the same. We will make all efforts to return to the Six-Party Talks. But, we will make tougher demands on U.S. to live up to its own commitments.”

Li concluded: “You four want bilateral contacts and know the effects of denying such contacts. In order to achieve success, we should have an active attitude. Unilateralism will not work.

Pritchard mentioned the Bush news that welcomed the return to the Talks and then added: “Bush also said the U.S. would be sending teams to Asia to make sure the UN Security Council sanctions would be implemented. Does that bother you?”

Li answered : “As for achieving the September 19 agreement [Joint Statement], we must have both short and long-term objectives in the Talks. Once the Six-Party Talks are convened, things will be discussed. We must suspend our nuclear activities. Although Mr. Bush said he welcomes the resumption of the Talks, we don’t consider that the U.S. will come to stop implementing the UN resolution. I personally think this is a reflection of the U.S. side’s pursuing dialogue and pressure. The UN resolution was passed, but different countries take different actions. There is a growing idea that the resolution was not to pressure the DPRK but to resume the Talks. With the resumption of the Talks, the U.S. and the DPRK can sit together. If the U.S. continues the pressure on us, it won’t convince others. And, the U.S. will lose face, and the other participants in the talks would not welcome the U.S. attitude.”

Pritchard asked: “Because China is reviewing the Banco Delta Asia sanctions and the U.S. says this won’t stop the Talks, if the U.S. continues to apply pressure, would this spoil the Talks? Li said: “Definitely! Once the Talks are convened, if the pressure continues, things will not be different. Without a change, the nuclear weapons will increase. In order to stop the [DPRK nuclear] program, there must have monitoring system within the Six-Party Talks or by other means. Since we have withdrawn from the IAEA, we have had no more contacts [with it]. The first stage is suspension, then dismantling. What should others do in the period in between suspension and dismantlement?: Build trust and confidence. We’ll have to monitor this.

IN CONFIDENCE

President Reagan said trust but verify. We should have this in mind. The DPRK should stop production, testing, and transferring weapons. This should be done in a verifiable way. The U.S. also should take actions in a verifiable way. ”

Pritchard asked whether other states might pressure the U.S. not to apply pressure against the DPRK. He mentioned Henry Kissinger’s recent visit to China and HK’s “package proposal” and asked Li whether the proposal had been communicated to Pyongyang.² Li did not answer the question about other states pressuring Washington but said: “Nothing came to us about this [Kissinger plan]. It was not discussed with us.”

Li continued: “First, we must resolve the sanctions. Both Hill and the Chinese understood this. They accepted our proposal. When we come back, we must resolve the sanctions. We now do not have a date to return. The date when we come back to the Talks will be before the end of the Fall or the end of the year.” (Later, Li suggested the date might be around December 1, assuming the logistics could be worked out.)

Jack then said, “Let me play devil’s advocate. Your nuclear test was not completely successful. Your missile test also was not successful, and yet the pressure from the U.S. was successful. Li laughed and said no: “What you [Pritchard] said is very different from reality. We never see it this way. The test was successful. It was a nuclear test, not a conventional [explosives] test. The U.S. found samples to show it was nuclear test. As for small size, we don’t care what they say. I don’t have the specific information, but our experts say they have confidence it [the test] was powerful. We are used to such criticism. So, we don’t care what others say. As a DPRK citizen, I am proud and confident that our test achieved our goals.”

Li Gun then said in response to a question: “Yes, the DPRK mission to the UN in New York will continue to be the point of contact; that is, Minister Kim Myong Gil. There is no counterpart for him in Washington, so that is why he is a minister, not an ambassador.”

Carlin asked about the meaning of “normalization” for North Koreans: Li answered: “As for full normalization, this would mean that confidence between us has been fully built, and we would no longer feel threatened. When we reach that level, at that time, we won’t need to keep even a single nuclear weapon. The establishment of diplomatic relations is not equivalent to full normalization. Confidence-building should be achieved so that the DPRK no longer feels threatened.

“Selig Harrison wrote an interesting article in which advocated that the normalization of U.S.-North Korean relations should be viewed in a geopolitical way. His analysis is reasonable. The Bush Administration has been insisting that the DPRK should be toppled, but Harrison said people should view the DPRK in geopolitical terms. Harrison asked: What are the benefits to the U.S. of a friendly DPRK? We can find a beneficial outcome that would be good for the U.S.” Li went on

² Before our trip, we were told that President Bush allegedly had bought into “the Kissinger package plan,” which had been communicated to Chinese President Hu Jintao earlier in October. Reportedly, the plan says that Administration would support an “accelerated, comprehensive package” with the DPRK with these elements: accelerated negotiations for a peace treaty; negotiations leading to normalization process; negotiations on security guarantees for the DPRK; and negotiations leading to the creation of a regional peace mechanism.

to say, "The Korean Peninsula is located in a very sensitive place in Northeast Asia and if relations are improved, the two countries can find a lot of beneficial things related to intelligence, the military, and economic relations. It would be good for the US to change its stubborn view that it dislikes North Korea and wants to topple it."

Li then spoke about his meeting in New York in March with Henry Kissinger: "I told him even if the U.S. side dislikes the DPRK, the DPRK would not be diminished or eliminated. This way of things would be unrealistic and counterproductive; the US should look for strategic interests if it wants to have normal relations with the DPRK."

Continuing, Li said: "The mood of reconciliation is very high on the Korean Peninsula. People should understand this mood on the Peninsula. We should find our common interests, not like Cheney, who continuously advocates eliminating the DPRK. He'll be out of office in 2008; people should see if we'll disappear by 2008."

"The US considers China its main rival in the region. In this rivalry, the Korean Peninsula is of great importance. I'll not go further in a detailed way, you may think further in that direction. But, some outsiders may think the Chinese has made great efforts and been the mediator to resume Six-Party Talks this time. This is not a correct judgment. *It [presumably resumption of Talks] is created by our decision, not by others in the middle [Li's emphasis].*"

Lewis asked: What should the first steps be in "action for action" as set forth in the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement (which Li and others repeatedly referred to as the "919 statement")?

Li said "In the 919 statement, there are tasks, some are long term and some immediate targets. The most pressing task is suspension of our nuclear activity. Everyone is interested in that job. Without stopping nuclear activities, it is quite natural to have an increase in the number of nuclear weapons. To have the nuclear problem stopped, there needs to be established a monitoring system, whether within the Six Party Talks or another framework. We have withdrawn from the IAEA and have no contact with them." Repeating what Li had said earlier, he said, "The first stage would be the suspension of nuclear activities. Later would come dismantlement. You may find a period between suspending and dismantling. What should other parties do in this period? In this period verification of confidence and trust would occur."

"If you read the 919 statement, the first point says that process is required to be verified.³ 'Trust but verify,' as Reagan said. In accordance with the Joint Statement, we should have that in mind. The DPRK stops manufacturing nuclear weapons, conducting no further tests, and not transferring nuclear weapons – all these should be proved in a verifiable way."

"In parallel with these steps, since the obligations of DPRK would be proven in a verifiable way, so, too, the U.S. obligations should also be proved in a verifiable way. The 919 statement also emphasized the principle of action for action. Ambassador Hill said they [the U.S.] are not trying to have the DPRK side first implement all its obligations."

³ This point reads: "1. The Six Parties unanimously reaffirmed that the goal of the Six-Party Talks is the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner."

Pritchard asked about the appointment of ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-mun to be the UN Secretary General. Li commented, "We feel pride in the new Secretary General. This is a matter of national dignity, and Ban listens well."

As the conversation ended, Li answered a question about the nuclear test, and his reply included something about "that bloody test" in reference to the missile test.

**Second Meeting, Dinner at the Pyongyang Koryo Hotel
1900-2140, November 1, 2006**

The dinner came before the news reached us concerning what had happened in the Beijing meeting between Christopher Hill and Kim Gye Gwan and before the meeting with the director of the Yongbyon nuclear facility. The dinner included Kwon Jong Gun, and Song Il Hyok. Because this was a dinner conversation, the delegation members could only recall some of the points in no particular order. Among other things, Li commented on these matters:

- Li said that in the Beijing meeting the North Koreans had pressed for step-by-step normalization and implementing the September 19 Joint Statement, while Christopher Hill advocated a three-stage process. Li would not discuss what Hill had said about that process. "Every step," Li said, "would have to have built-in trust. Implementing 919 will require taking small steps along with each side's own actions. This must be done to raise confidence."
- When Hecker asked if the 5 MWe reactor at Yongbyon was still operating and suggested it was not, Li said: "How do you know it is not operation. It is still running. Do not believe what you learn 'from above.'"
- When Hecker asked about the safety and security of the DPRK nuclear weapons ("because an effective deterrent will require you to have your warheads and missiles mated and this is very dangerous), Li said somewhat sharply, "Why do you want to know this? Do you want to limit our arsenal?"
- In response to a question by Lewis concerning the Six-Party Talks, Li emphasized that the sanctions issue "must be resolved in short order. The Chinese must unfreeze the BDA funds, and the U.S. must not interfere."
- On the freezing (Li's term) of the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) funds, he referred to his recommendations given to the U.S Treasury and other officials in March 2006. These recommendations, he said, were to 1) organize a joint committee and exchange data; 2) pose questions based on the exchanged data and work toward an understanding; 3) open an account in a U.S. bank, such as the Chase Manhattan Bank, and put the BDA funds in that bank; and 4) provide the DPRK a checking machine to test for counterfeit bills. Li added: "Deputy Assistant Secretary Kathy Stevens said she would let us know the U.S. Government's response to my recommendations. However, we only learned from the press that the U.S. had rejected them. State never let us know."

- Pritchard and Lewis discussed the status of the National Committee on North Korea (NCNK) and the role of Karin Lee. We discussed why the NCNK's Congressional delegation to the DPRK had been denied visas. On the denial, Li said, "You kept changing the schedule and making it cover every hour. This was insulting, and despite our earlier interest in the delegation, we decided to say no." This led Li to comment on Mercy Corps ("it is too small in the DPRK") and World Vision ("it is just right because it is giving several million dollars to modernize a hospital")
- On the U.S. sense of urgency, Li said: "Americans need to be patient. Lewis can less afford to be patient because he is old." He said that Lewis and his wife would be welcome to come again in 2007.
- At several points in the conversation, Li reminisced about the "high points" in U.S.-DPRK relations in the 1990s. He particularly recalled meetings with Evans Rovere and Carlin with Kim Myong Gil.
- Li asked about rate of plutonium production in the 5 MWe reactor because of his discussion with Pritchard. Hecker explained that the reactor produces approximately 6 kg (or one weapons worth per year) of plutonium regardless of using new or existing fuel rods. Li said, "Thanks, I did not understand all of that before."
- Li asked about the relationship between yield and the amount of plutonium. If Nagasaki was 20 kt and used 6 kg of plutonium, then how much plutonium do you need for a 1 kt device? He appeared to believe that the yield and amount of plutonium scaled directly (and most likely linearly). Hecker explained that it doesn't work that way: "If the yield is only 200 tons that doesn't mean you can use 1 percent of the plutonium of Nagasaki. If you don't have a sufficient amount of plutonium, you get no yield."
- Hecker mentioned the "internal and external" responsibilities a state has when it possesses nuclear weapons. He explained the importance of safety from accidental detonation and also that states have to assure the security of the weapons and materials. Li asked how other countries handle this responsibility, and Hecker explained our work with the Russians in the early 1990s. Li asked if the cooperation preceded or followed the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Hecker said that Americans at Los Alamos had worked cooperatively with Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Li seemed to take some satisfaction that the U.S. did not do this before the dissolution.
- On several occasions, we tried to find out about the timing of the missile and nuclear tests. Li did not directly acknowledge our comments that the decision for the tests had been a unified one and that it had probably occurred in April or early May.
- Finally, on the reasons for coming back to the Six-Party Talks, Li commented that the U.S. still thinks – incorrectly – that it can maneuver with China against Pyongyang. "When Hill can't deliver, he tends to fall back on China to pressure us. The U.S. still thinks that sanctions work against us." Li repeatedly played down the Chinese role, including the

Chinese role in the just-held Beijing meetings. Nevertheless, he said, “we believe that the window [for a solution] has been opened.”

- Carlin noted that outsiders would now look at the North differently when it came to the question of economic assistance. People would say, “If they have the resources to develop a nuclear weapons program, they should have resources of their own for economic development.” Li Gun answered curtly, “Thank you for that observation,” and let the subject drop. (Interestingly, this question of expending resources on the nuclear weapons program was a point General Ri Chan Bok took up in his presentation the next day.)

**Third Meeting, Dinner Hosted by the Delegation at the Pyongyang Koryo Hotel
1800-2145, November 3, 2006**

At this dinner, in addition to Li Gun, those attending included Choi Son Hyi and Hwang Tae Hyok, who had attended the meetings between Christopher Hill and Kim Gye Gwan in Beijing on October 31, as well as Kwon Jong Gun, Song Il Hyok, and Kim Hyon Chol.

During this dinner, it was especially difficult to take notes, though much of the conversation focused on the October 31 Beijing meeting, which Li Gun had already discussed.

These points were made during this dinner:

- Li Gun said: “We came back to the Six-Party Talks because of the nuclear test and your [the United States’] compromise and we are now an equal.” Later, he repeated this and said: “Now, we are a nuclear weapon state and therefore an equal to the United States.”
- Li: “We gave notice of the test to both Russia and China before the October 9 nuclear test.”
- Li: The U.S. signaled a change in policy related to the Talks only “shortly before” the meeting in Beijing on October 31.
- Li: Kissinger would not have made a difference if he had come to Pyongyang and “nothing he apparently advocated was communicated to us.”
- Choi Son Hyi (who had participated in the Beijing meeting on October 31): “The DPRK and the U.S. agreed to solve the issue in a two-hour meeting [in Beijing]. Now, we will watch to see what the U.S. does about the BDA sanctions.... The meeting was only based on the prior signal from the U.S., and the outcome was not pre-wired.”
- Choi and others barely mentioned the 6-7 hours of multilateral meetings in Beijing because those meetings included the Chinese. For them, only the two-hour bilateral meeting counted.
- Choi said that Carlin’s imaginary Kang Sok Ju speech – delivered at a Brookings conference in September – had made many people angry. When asked who, she replied, “Kang and others at a high level. You know who I mean.”