

**MEETINGS WITH RI GUN, DIRECTOR GENERAL,
BUREAU OF AMERICAN AFFAIRS, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (BAA)**
Pyongyang
1000-1200 and 1830-2100, 10 November 2010

Present: Choe Kang Il, Section Chief, BAA; Hwang Tae Hyok, BAA; Gwon Jong Gun, Desk Officer, BAA; and Sok Won Hyok, Researcher, BAA. We had met all of these officials before.

After the usual greetings, Ri Gun began by reading in Korean from a formal written statement, though he added extemporaneous comments at many points. He began by saying our visit reminded him this time of the visit in 2004, we showed you the reprocessing and the metal. You can tell what you have seen. He added, "You are well known in this country. Then [in 2004] we had a detailed discussion. We know of your cooperation with the NGO Christian Friends of Korea in building the tuberculosis laboratory in our country. This was a major contribution. You have discussed sensitive issues and in parallel, humanitarian areas. We are grateful.

"Since your visit last year [September 2009], there have been many changes. Then relations were tense and confrontational. That situation has continued up to this point." (Our sense was that this comment was not delivered in a combative tone, which had been the case in February 2009.) Ri continued: "After [former President] Clinton's visit in August 2009, the mood in our relations began to change. In October that year, we came to San Diego, and in December, [Ambassador Stephen] Bosworth visited the DPRK. Our two sides confirmed respect for the September 19 [2005] Joint Statement, and we confirmed willingness to implement it. Also, they both confirmed that the Six-Party Talks were the only diplomatic forum to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

"In March 2010, the process was underway for U.S.-North Korea dialogue in New York. On March 26, the *Cheonan* incident occurred. The *Cheonan* incident was put to an end by the U.S. Security Council Presidential Statement on July 8. The issuing of that statement meant the formal end of the *Cheonan* incident. Afterwards, the U.S. side contacted us and said to 'turn the page' and restart the dialogue. But the situation developed in another direction. After the Presidential statement, the U.S. State and Defense Secretaries held the 2+2 meeting with officials in South Korea. In the meeting, they announced large-scale military exercises and new sanctions against our country.

"The U.S. side told us to overcome the *Cheonan* incident and restart dialogue but proved in action to be provocative. Especially, the Secretary of State's visit to the DMZ is the first visit by a U.S. Secretary of State since Dulles' visit in the 1950s. So our people and army expressed anger about this. Now the U.S. was completely on the South Korean side. It said the DPRK must apologize for the ship sinking and promise never to let it happen again.

"The NDC Inspection Team recently issued a report on the facts of the *Cheonan* incident. The South Koreans claimed in their report on 20 May that the *Cheonan* had been sunk by our torpedo and showed a piece of aluminum from that torpedo. However, our torpedoes are not made of aluminum but from 'another metal.' We said we would send a sample of what our torpedoes are made of. I mention this because South Korea keeps relying on this to keep the U.S. from restarting dialogue unless there is a North Korean apology.

“In parallel with this incident, the U.S. is relying on the ‘strategic patience’ policy. Whether they rely on patience or dialogue, it doesn’t really matter to us. The reason we agreed to the U.S. proposal to overcome the *Cheonan* incident and to restart the dialogue was out of our will to stabilize the situation and implement the spirit of the September 19 Joint Statement.

“While the Obama administration is relying on patience, we are moving ahead in progress on building a prosperous nation. On the occasion of the [September] party conference, our people rallied around our leader and consolidated our Party. We have made big progress in the country’s economic development. There have been many successes in the development of our self-reliant nuclear energy sector. I hope you’ll realize the success we’ve made. You can visit and see our progress and realize it when you have meetings with our officials.

“Our general evaluation of the Obama administration is that it has strengthened the relations between South Korea and America. We are not asking the U.S. to sacrifice its ally to develop relations with our country. But, if you look back at our relations [between the U.S. and the DPRK] in the 1990s, there are some examples in which you didn’t benefit by relying blindly on South Korea. If the U.S. looks at North Korea from South Korea’s point of view, it will not benefit. I’m sure Carlin knows Kim Yong Sam’s opposition and how we lost precious time, that is, how the U.S. lost time. This had an effect of Clinton [not] being able to visit the DPRK in 2000. If the Clinton visit had been realized, we would have made big progress and wouldn’t have tested our nuclear weapons.”

Ri then turned to China: “Many experts in the U.S. and Asia are saying the strengthening of U.S.-South Korea relations is pushing the DPRK and China together. It is really important to clearly analyze North-South relations at the time of Kim Dae-jung and Rho Moo-hyun. Compared with the current situation, which is better for the U.S., then or now?

“Since the U.S. is not ready, we will not move in haste. Therefore, the U.S. should not put forward old requests: that we should show sincerity in denuclearization, and improve North-South relations before Six-Party Talks.

“Obama is relying on ‘strategic patience.’ The essence of this is demanding from us to give up our system, our ideology and our principles which our people have chosen. He demands that we give up our system and will wait until that is accomplished. What has happened? While Obama has waited, we have realized the miniaturization of the nuclear weapon and have developed the technology to put the nuclear weapon into the delivery means thereby completing our nuclear deterrent. [Later, Lewis asked the translator, Sok Won Hyok, for his notes on the previous sentence, and this is his word-for-word translation.] I’m sure you saw our military parade on October 9. People with common knowledge of our military realize our gains. You have seen our anti-ballistic missile system.” [Lewis asked: Is this anti-missile systems or ballistic missiles? Ri repeated in English: “Anti-missile system.”] If the Obama administration keeps relying on a strategy of patience, we can concentrate on our economy without worries.”

Ri then returned to the Party Conference: “There were expectations during our Party Conference that our policy will change, but our *songun* [military-first] policy will not change. You will see the city and Yongbyon, and you’ll see the reality of what I have said.”

This ended Ri Gun’s formal statement. Lewis then conveyed his condolences on the death of Vice Marshal Jo Myong Nok, whom Lewis noted he had met in October 2000, before Jo went on to Washington and met President Clinton in the White House.

Carlin then discussed the importance of a “broader relationship” between the U.S. and North Korea. He mentioned Stanford’s health and educational projects in Pyongyang and said, “The TB health project succeeded and the role of the Foreign Ministry to make that happen was critical. We need to contrast the pictures of the visit of Secretary Clinton to the DMZ with those of the visit of Secretary Albright to Pyongyang in 2000. It shows how much ground we have lost. The relationship of our two countries is very fragile, and it needs careful ‘feeding.’ It needs to gain momentum. Patience is not a policy; it is just rhetoric. We need to find constructive things that we can do together.” Can we think of steps?

Ri Gun replied that Carlin’s remarks reminded him of the negotiations in Geneva in 1994: “What I mean is, we still have the capability to exchange views and positions. Right now, you mentioned the current atmosphere in Washington. You mentioned that waiting for us to change is not a correct strategy and that we need momentum. The question is: What is the method to overcome the stalemate? In what phase of the Six-Party Talks did we come to a stalemate? In the 3 October 2007 meeting, we all agreed to take steps based on our disablement [of the Yongbyon plutonium complex]. This was the second phase of implementation of the Six-Party accords. [The first phase was halting the operations at the complex.] Implementation came to an end on 5 April 2009.¹

“What is the current status on our side? We completed the disablement at Yongbyon of our nuclear complex. We destroyed the [5MW reactor] cooling tower and removed the spent fuel rods from the reactor. And we were in the final stage of disabling the reprocessing facility. In turn, the U.S. removed us from the ‘terrorist list’ and from the Trading with the Enemy Act and delivered 200,000 tons of heavy fuel oil [HFO] as required by the agreement. All the others were to provide 200,000 tons of HFO or the energy equivalent. The U.S., China, and Russia did this. South Korea delivered 70% of its requirement, but then Lee Myung-bak stopped this. Japan did not supply even one gram. This is the current status of implementation as of October 3. When we say to back to April 5 last year, we mean go back to this situation.

“Most important is the sanctions imposed after the satellite launch and the second nuclear test. The purpose of the satellite launch and the second test we explained in detail on your last visit. One obstacle to getting back to April 5 is the sanctions put on us. Our position is clear and

¹ On April 13, 2009, the UN Security Council issued a Presidential Statement that condemned “the 5 April 2009 (local time) launch by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), which is in contravention of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006). The Security Council reiterates that the DPRK must comply fully with its obligations under Security Council resolution 1718 (2006). The Security Council demands that the DPRK not conduct any further launch.”

consistent: We cannot talk about denuclearization while we are still under sanctions. But once we sit down and talk, I think we can come up with a solution.

“First Vice Minister Kim Kye Gwan made this clear to the Chinese side on 15 October this year in his talks with [PRC Ambassador] Wu Dawei. Returning the situation to April 5 is one way to overcome the stalemate. We really hope you won’t talk into the air, saying things like improve North-South relations or show sincerity on denuclearization. It will just waste time if you keep talking like this. Assistant Secretary for Non-Proliferation Ross said the Six-Party Talks were the only way forward. The State Department press spokesman has said that if they see sincerity from our side, they will restart the process. And now the South Korean side has said that an apology for the *Cheonan* incident from us is not a precondition for the Six-Party Talks.”

Lewis said that we can do things at different levels – talk with people in Washington and write editorials, but we need interactions with you to become more active. He said we had major articles in the *New York Times*, *Science Magazine* and medical journal *Lancet* about health diplomacy on TB. This helped get U.S. backing for the Global Fund. The Ministry made this happen. We need your help on education.

Ri replied about the TB laboratory project: “You said that the MFA made this happen; it’s the other way around. CFK has been doing this for a long time. Then, our people realized the importance of this issue. The Ministry of Public Health [MOPH] contacted our ministry. It needed our approval to go ahead, and we told the MOPH to go ahead. Similarly on the education proposal you made last year, the Education Commission [now the combination of the Ministry of Higher Education and the Ministry of General Education] has its own standards and is doing a lot of cooperation in foreign countries. We are discussing an educational project with the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) [he said, “the American Social Science Academy”], and the NGOs have good standards. We will discuss this cooperation with the Academy again next year. Moreover, Syracuse University invited a delegation headed by a leader from Kim Chaek University, and we have invited the president of Syracuse University to lead a delegation to our country. In many cases, our people think that cooperation with American NGOs is very good, but they have serious doubts about other types of cooperation. ”

We then discussed educational cooperation, and Hecker mentioned that some members of the AAAS delegation had talked to him about science visits and how to follow up on the earlier AAAS visit. He also mentioned a North Korean delegation that visited Atlanta. (All this was before our discussions with the Education Commission, when we reached an agreement on educational cooperation.)

Hecker then noted that diplomacy provides the context for technical cooperation and mentioned the obviously important relationship between diplomacy and denuclearization. He added: “Technical cooperation can also aid diplomacy. Our 2004 visit [to Pyongyang and Yongbyon] served both of our countries well. It cleared up ambiguities and it helped clarify the nuclear situation in the DPRK.

“Here are the issues that we need to clarify now: The LWR news can cut both ways. It could abort any momentum in future diplomacy. Many people will misinterpret the LWR news, and say that

the DPRK has found another way to make the bomb. David Albright will tell everyone that it is not possible for the DPRK to make an LWR and its fuel. But I [Hecker] will say that having an LWR was the DPRK's original interest. I never say that the DPRK can't do something. I will want to give my best technical assessment of your LWR project [after seeing it on Friday, November 12] and its motivation and status." Hecker added that he hoped to do the following to achieve this clarity: "1) a visit to the LWR construction site and fuel fabrication facility related to making the fuel rods for the LWR, and the uranium enrichment facility; 2) a visit to the old 5MW reactor to assure that its disablement continues and to the fresh fuel rod storage site to be sure the rods that we saw in 2007 are still there; and 3) a visit to the small IRT reactor; 4) a visit to the fusion experiment; and a visit to see the miniaturization of the nuclear warheads that Ri mentioned, including the technology mating the warhead to a delivery vehicle.

Ri said that Jack Pritchard made big news with his visit. "You can make even bigger news. I will relay your requests to the related agency. We have contacted the agency at Yongbyon and conveyed your requests. You can propose many issues and have detailed discussions. We'll discuss the rest during dinner."

Lewis mentioned China, specifically on cooperation with China and health and maritime issues.

Lewis concluded the two hour conversation with a discussion on how to build on our past positive achievements and perhaps how to relate the denuclearization diplomacy to William Perry's quest for a "world free of nuclear weapons." John added maybe this could be a framework about how we think about the region and denuclearization.

Ri Gun invited our delegation to have dinner that evening, and Lewis invited Ri Gun and Vice Minister Ri Yong Ho to be our guest for dinner on Friday after the visit to Yongbyon.

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At the dinner that evening at the Koryo Hotel, we had a very good discussion but learned little more than we had gained from the conversation that morning.

We discussed the agreement reached that afternoon with Director General Han Kyu Sam of the Education Committee on the building of a library of American literature plus other American books appropriate for the Changdok High School. This is the high school attended by Kim Il Sung and is regarded as the North's premier six-year high school.² Ri Gun said, "You will be the most highly regarded American organization if you can build the library at this Changdok High School!" He then asked, "Who will pay for the library?" Lewis said, "Funds from Marjorie Kiewit," who had met Ri twice before. Ri seemed very pleased with this and said he hoped "Marjorie" could come again even though she would turn 90 next year. He asked Lewis to give her his best wishes.

² On October 28, 2005, a KCNA story said: "The Changdok School is associated with his immortal revolutionary history in which he [Kim Il Sung] studied there with a great will for revolution from April, Juche 12 (1923) to Juche 14 (1925). After Korean liberation the President visited his alma mater on Oct. 28, Juche 34 (1945) and clearly indicated the way to be followed by the country's democratic education."

Lewis and Ri also discussed the conversation with Major General Pak Rim Su, especially the conversation about the MIA remains recovery effort that had been stopped in 2005 by the Bush administration. He concurred that this effort could still be restarted, but the areas of the remains were being badly degraded.

Parenthetically Ri, when asked about Kim Jong Un again, would only say that he is the “young general.” (When we returned to China, Foreign Ministry official Yang Xiyu said that the Chinese knew for certain that the “young general” is 28 and will turn 30 in 2012. He added, This is interesting – Kim Il Sung would have been 100 in 2012, Kim Jong Il will be 70 then, and Kim Jong Un will be 30.)

Finally, Ri Gun said, “Your story after this visit will be even bigger than Jack Pritchard’s,” and he hinted that our delegation would see the uranium enrichment facility.

He also suggested we would not see him again if we hosted Vice Minister Ri Yong Ho at our return banquet. We parted by saying that if the purchase of the books for the Changdok High School could be completed in time for the beginning of the new school year on April 1, we would request to return to the DPRK at that time. Ri Gun nodded and said that should be okay.

Hecker asked why they are building an LWR. Ri said that “we need electricity.” Why not rebuild the gas-graphite reactors? Ri said because “the LWRs are modern technology.” Hecker asked why they have not restarted the 5 MWe gas-graphite reactor, because it would not take long? Ri said, “you’ll have to ask the people at Yongbyon.” Hecker asked if we will get to see the uranium enrichment facilities – Ri did not answer, but said “you will have big news.” Hecker also asked why shut down the fuel fabrication facility, and Ri said again, “you’ll have to ask in Yongbyon.”

Lewis asked for clarification about the bomb miniaturization and about mounting them on a missile. Ri gave no answer, but added “Don’t tell CNN that.”

Carlin talked about the effect that the LWR will have on the Six-Party Talks. Ri said, “You are right, that will affect the talks. It’s every country’s sovereign right to develop reactors.” Carlin asked if the IAEA might be allowed back in. Ri gave an emphatic, “no!” Hecker asked if the U.S. technical team may be allowed back in. Ri left this as a question mark and did not give an explicit response, saying only, “You go and visit Yongbyon first.” Hecker mentioned Kazakhstan and how we are working with them for peaceful nuclear development.