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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 16, 1994

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
IN PRESS AVAILABILITY

The Briefing Room

5:45 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Good afternoon.

In recent weeks, we have been consulting with our allies and friends on the imposition of sanctions against North Korea because of its refusal to permit full inspections of its nuclear program. Today there are reports that the North Koreans, in discussions with President Carter, may have offered new steps to resolve the international community's concerns, saying that International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors and monitoring equipment would be left in place and that North Korea desires to replace its present nuclear program with a new light water reactor technology that is more resistant to nuclear proliferation.

If North Korea means by this, also, that it is willing to freeze its nuclear program while talks take place, this could be a promising development. As we review these reports today and in the days ahead, I want to take a moment to explain the extent of our interests and the steps we are taking to protect them.

Our nation clearly has vital interests on the Korean Peninsula. Four decades after the conflict there that claimed hundreds of thousand of South Korean and American lives, South Korea continues to face a threat of a million troops, most of them massed near its border.

America's commitment to South Korea, our treaty ally, our trading partner, our fellow democracy, is unshakable. We have some 37,000 American troops in Korea to maintain that commitment, and their safety is of vital importance to us.

We also have an interest in preserving the stability of the Asian-Pacific region. And we have a compelling interest in preserving the integrity of the Nonproliferation Treaty, and to prevent the spread of global nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Therefore, in response to North Korea's nuclear activities, we have consistently pursued two goals: a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula and a strong international nonproliferation regime. We've made serious and extensive efforts to resolve the North Korean issue through negotiations, and have given North Korea many opportunities to return to compliance with its own nonproliferation commitments, made first nine years ago when North Korea signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty; and in 1991, when North Korea signed -- agreed with South Korea to pursue a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula.

We've made clear that these negotiations could continue, but only if North Korea cooperated with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and did not deepen its violation of international nuclear safeguards. If today's developments mean that North Korea is genuinely and verifiably prepared to freeze its nuclear program while talks go on -- and we hope that is the case -- then we would be

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willing to resume high-level talks. In the meantime, we will pursue our consultations on sanctions at the United Nations.

In recent weeks I've consulted -- or days, in recent days I've consulted with President Kim of South Korea, Prime Minister Hata of Japan, President Yeltsin of Russia and others. I will continue to consult closely with them on this matter, with other international leaders and, of course, with members of Congress of both parties.

Through all appropriate means, I will keep working to ensure the security of South Korea, the safety of our troops, the stability of the Asian Pacific, and the protection of our nation, our friends and our allies from the spread of nuclear weapons.

There is a great deal at stake. We are pursuing our interests with resolve and steadiness. We are hopeful that this development today will be positive, and we are awaiting further evidence.

Q Is it possible, or probable, that you could know with full confidence that North Korea has frozen its program? Is time a factor? Are you worried about the clock ticking if they really are bent on a nuclear program?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, the answer to the second question is, yes, time is a factor. The answer to the first question is, yes, we believe we would be able to know, based on the representations that were apparently made today whether they have, in fact, frozen their program while talks continue.

Q How long might that take, sir?

Q Mr. President, are you concerned that they might be playing for time and trying to weaken your hand with the Chinese and perhaps the Russians and others who might be worried about sanctions?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we'll just have to see. These discussions occurred today; there will be more discussions tomorrow, tomorrow Korean time, which is there now. And we will just have to see. But it depends on what the Koreans actually meant by what they said today, and we will have to see.

So Ambassador Albright continued today pursuing our consultations on sanctions with the non-permanent members of the Security Council of the United Nations, and we are proceeding and we're just going to watch developments.

Q But there were some concerns about appearing weak in their eyes.

THE PRESIDENT: No. It depends on what they mean. That's why we're being very clear today to say that we want to know what they meant by their representation and whether it represents a change of position. If it is a different position on which we can honorably resume negotiations, knowing, in fact, that there will be no development of the nuclear program while we are having discussions with them, then it is not an inappropriate delay. Then it is a genuine effort to resolve disputes which could lead to a safer world at a much lower cost. It simply depends on what their intentions and actions are.

Q Mr. President, why have you put so much distance between the White House and President Carter's visit? Your aides have always stressed that, no, this is private; no, the President has not talked to President Carter. Why don't you talk to him? I mean, why don't you try to find out what's really going on, and why would you not debrief him when he comes back?

THE PRESIDENT: Oh, I intend to debrief him when he comes back. I absolutely do. And I talked to him before he went, personally.

Q You did?

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely. So --

Q Well, there seems to be some sense that he's not representing us, and --

THE PRESIDENT: No. Well, I think it's been important in this whole development for the way it's unfolded, that he was invited there as a citizen, as a representative of the Carter Center, to have a dialogue not as a representative of the government, but as someone who could see Kim Il Sung and could have a detailed conversation with him. And I think that the way this has unfolded proves that, at least that some -- we have gotten some information there that might not have otherwise been the case. So I don't have any problem with it.

But I think it is important that the United States, and its interests, can only be stated by people who are ultimately in charge with doing that. And I think President Carter fully agreed with the characterization of his role in his mission. That is the way he wanted it as well as the way we wanted it, and we think that that gives us some possibility that something will come out of this. Whether it will or not, we still don't know.

Q Mr. President, two things, sir. Will this inevitably take the steam out of your effort to build support for possible sanctions, and second, the Senate today passed by a quite overwhelming vote a sense of the Senate resolution calling on you to bolster force, your forces in South Korea. Your reaction to both of those matters.

THE PRESIDENT: First, we will do whatever is necessary to protect our own forces there and to fulfill our commitments to the South Koreans.

I met recently with all the commanders-in-chief, including General Luck, our commander in South Korea. I met today, again, with the Secretary of Defense and General Shalikashvili to discuss this and other issues. And we will take appropriate steps as we should, as we must. So there is nothing to be concerned about.

Now, on the other issue, what happens here depends upon whether this is, in fact, a new development. That is really what is at stake. Can -- will it take the steam out of sanctions? Not if there is nothing new here. If there is a genuine prospect for not only leaving the IAEA monitors and equipment in place and moving away from the present nuclear technology, which is very susceptible to proliferation, to a light water technology which is less susceptible, in an environment in which -- and I stress -- in an environment in which there is freeze on any nuclear activities, then the international community will be able to pursue its objectives of adherence by North Korea to the NPT, thwarting the proliferation of nuclear weapons, achieving the agreement North Korea made for a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula in an appropriate way.

It depends on the facts. It all depends on the facts, and that is what we will attempt to determine over the next several hours.

Thank you very much.

END

5:53 P.M. EDT

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 16, 1994

PRESS BRIEFING BY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR POLITICAL AND MILITARY AFFAIRS ROBERT GALLUCCI

The Briefing Room

4:52 P.M. EDT

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I'm going to begin by first reading a statement.

The United States welcomes indications given to President Carter that North Korea desires to find a constructive solution to the very serious issues between North Korea and the international community.

The United States has always been ready to engage in a third round of talks under the proper circumstances. In this connection, we note North Korea's assurances that IAEA inspectors and IAEA monitoring equipment would be kept in place. We also note North Korea's desire to replace its gas graphite fuel cycle with more proliferation-resistant light water technology, and its willingness to return to full compliance with the Nonproliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards, including special inspections, as part of an overall settlement of this issue.

That could be a constructive step if it means that North Korea is also committed to freezing the major elements of its nuclear program while new talks took place. That is, not refueling the reactor or reprocessing the spent fuel it has just removed, and permitting the IAEA to maintain the continuity of safeguards.

After confirming this meaning of the message from North Korea in diplomatic channels, we would be prepared to go a third round, acting as we have before, pursuant to U.N. resolutions. Meanwhile, we are continuing to consult on our sanctions resolution at the Security Council.

Q Secretary Gallucci, why would we go to a third round at this time when we still have not been satisfied about the prior -- violations?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: We have, from the beginning of the effort to engage the North Koreans bilaterally, described a basis for these talks. And the basis for the talks involve a number of elements. Among those elements was an element that described the requirement that the North Koreans not discharge fuel from their reactor without providing for adequate IAEA safeguards.

The reason for that is because when the fuel is discharged from the reactor, it is possible if the IAEA can do what it wants to do, for the agency to figure out what happened in 1989, to get at the cause of this problem in the first place.

The reason we are not talking to the North Koreans today is because, although they met the other bases for our dialogue, at the end of May and through early June, they did discharge fuel without the adequate safeguards. What we said at that point is we would return the matter to the Security Council. We also said that

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if an adequate basis could be established, we would, of course, always return to talk with the North Koreans.

Our objective in this matter is not to seek sanctions; seeking sanctions is a means. The objective, of course, is to get the North Koreans to the table to discuss this issue and resolve it. And that's what we're aiming to do. The point today, I think for you, is that there may be, in this message, a basis for returning to talks with the North Koreans.

Q Should we delay the sanctions then? Should we delay the resolution or should we proceed in trying to get support for the resolution since it has its own built-in delay?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: As I indicated, we are at the United Nations in New York today, continuing our consultations on sanctions. At the same time, we plan to explore in diplomatic channels the meaning of the message we received today.

Q Why do you need further explanation? Don't you think President Carter is able to convey a message? You don't trust his words?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: We listened very carefully to President Carter today, and we understood his message, I think in whatever detail President Carter conveyed it to us. This is a complicated matter. There are elements, as I tried to indicate in the statement, which remain to be clarified.

Our intention is, in fact, through diplomatic channels to try to clarify those elements. If the message conveys the kind of meaning that I indicated, namely that the North Koreans are prepared to take particular steps to reestablish the basis for a dialogue -- and that is the suspension of reprocessing, suspension of refueling of the reactor, and maintaining the continuity of safeguards -- under those circumstances, we would find the basis adequate to resume a dialogue.

Q Mr. Gallucci, in the past you've said that the North Koreans should discuss these nuclear issues with the International Atomic Energy Agency, and not with the United States, that if they made progress with the IAEA, that would set the stage for a higher level resumption of discussion with the United States. Is the Clinton administration now backing away from that position and opening up the door to direct technical negotiations with North Korea, skirting the IAEA?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: No. All along, the United States has made it clear that when it gets down to ultimately what is acceptable in terms of international safeguards, it is going to be a matter for the IAEA to set that standard. That's what it does.

What we have been doing is undertaking a dialogue with the North Koreans when the circumstances were right for such a dialogue -- and they have not, I remind you, been right, since last July -- in order to establish a basis for the IAEA to continue its effort of the North Koreans to apply the correct safeguards. That will still be the objective of a dialogue. It'll still be to create circumstances in which the North Koreans can come into compliance with IAEA safeguards.

The determination of when they're in compliance will not be made by the United States, it will be made by the IAEA.

Q Mr. Carter seemed to think he had the breakthrough today. I take it from what you're saying here today that it might be, but you can't tell.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I think it's fair to say that we've looked at the message, we see possibly some new elements in the message, we will be exploring the meaning of the message in diplomatic channels, and only after we're able to do that will we be able to characterize it.

Q Will you also see, possibly, an attempt here to create an atmosphere in which sanctions are less likely to buy more time?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Our objective here is not to buy more time.

Q Them.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Oh, I see. you're talking about the interpretation that the North Koreans -- yes, I don't --

Q Can we get that answer on camera, please?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: The question was, as I understand it, might this be an effort by the North Koreans to stall and buy more time. Is that correct?

I'm well past myself trying to interpret the motivation of North Korea. And what I will tell you is, we will look at what they say and what they are prepared to do, and we'll act on that basis.

Q Sir, you sounded rather degrading of Mr. Carter. Why don't you join us? Aren't you happy that he's gotten to some conclusion? He's gone farther along than you all have.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Our reaction -- the question is, why don't I have more joy, I guess, at what Mr. Carter has accomplished. I think we're going to wait until we can actually determine what the content of that message is before we respond with any more joy than we now have.

Q There's one thing that President Carter clearly accomplished that you all had not accomplished. Namely, he extracted a commitment from North Korea not to eject the inspectors, and he did so in an interesting way: he did so by speaking directly with the senior leader of North Korea who he said was not well-informed about the likelihood that they were about to be ejected.

It raises questions, does it not, about the American strategy of declining to address these issues with senior North Korean officials in the past? Here, you have a private citizen going, or someone you have described as a private citizen repeatedly, not as an official government emissary, making headway when, and not as part of the government, but really outside of the government's effort. Does that cause you to engage in any self-questioning about the approach that you've taken over the past months?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Jeff, I always engage in self-questioning, but not on this point. My feeling about this, as I said before, is I don't really know what North Korean motivations are. The proposition, I think, that underlies your question is that somehow or other, because of a failure to communicate up until now. Kim Il Sung did not understand that we wished the inspectors to be there, and with Jimmy Carter in front of him, he was able to discern that objective of ours.

That, to me, appears, with all due respect, ludicrous. I do not know what the purpose of the decision of the North Koreans

at this point to make this offer. What is important is that you have, I think, correctly identified an element which is interesting -- namely, a commitment to leave the inspectors in place.

By the way, I would note to you that leaving the inspectors in place is something the Security Council, by presidential statement, required the North Koreans to do, but indeed the commitment is new.

Q There are two things. The IAEA said earlier this month that they lost continuity on those fuel rods. Is there some way that genie can be put back in the bottle and you can regain them? Secondly, what is the response to Mr. Carter's hope and suggestion that Mr. Clinton speak directly to Kim?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Okay. The IAEA did not say they lost continuity on the fuel rods. The question of continuity of safeguards is, in fact, not a problem at the moment in North Korea, and has not been now for about a month or so. It was reaffirmed, the continuity of safeguards knowledge, with the last inspection that occurred in May. And it was on the basis of that inspection that we had announced our willingness to go to a third round.

What happened with the discharge of fuel by the North Koreans without proper IAEA safeguards, is that the agency lost the ability to use that methodology, namely the analysis of the fuel, to determine what happened in 1989. That loss is, by the agency's own characterization, irrevocable. And that was an important method of getting at the truth of what happened in 1989. There are some others, including special inspections. Those are still open to the agency when, and if, the North Koreans permit the agency to do such inspections.

Q What about the other question about the possibility of a direct conversation? Has Mr. Carter suggested that President Clinton speak directly to President Kim?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: There were a number of ideas and suggestions, I think, coming from President Carter, and I think I'll let him speak to that.

Q Bob, what specifically do you need diplomatically from North Korea in order to engage in a third round of talks? Do you need a written message, or a written pledge or promise? And how will you hold those talks? Will it be Mr. Hubbard and his Korean counterpart in New York?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: What I anticipate without going into overwhelming detail, Lee, is that we will probably use a New York channel as the open diplomatic channel we have to the North Koreans, to get at the meaning of today's message. And beyond that, in terms of what we understand that they are prepared to do, and what we will require to do, I think has to be a matter of consultation within government, which, quite frankly, today we have not had time to do.

Q Has there been come communication by the administration of your willingness to provide the North Koreans with the light water technology that they're after? Will that be part of the third round, or have you communicated that, or did Carter communicate it in some way?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: In the July round, the second round, the North Koreans raised the subject of giving up graphite moderated reactor technology if they could be provided with a light water reactor. We, at the time, in a joint statement,

indicated that we are willing to commit ourselves to helping bring that about as part of an ultimate settlement, and that is still our position.

That does not mean that we would finance a light water reactor. It does not mean that we would provide a light water reactor or even provide any technology. It means that we are prepared to be helpful in having the North Koreans obtain one. And there are many countries that can provide that technology.

Q In what way would it be helpful?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Well, I think that would be left to a third round discussion as we find out exactly what's on their mind as well.

Q How long ago did you speak to President Carter and how long did the conversation last?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Hours. More than five hours ago is the last time I spoke with him.

Q How many times?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I spoke to him, myself, once.

Q Did he tell you -- did he talk to the President?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I'm going to go this far: He did not talk to the President of the United States, and I would rather not go into who else he talked to. I'm certainly prepared to tell you I talked to him, though.

Q Did he tell you he was going to do an interview with CNN right after he spoke with you?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: Yes, he did.

Q Did you have any problem with his going public like that?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I did not express a view.

Q There were some critical words from Moscow today about the way the U.S. is going about pursuing sanctions. Has there been a kind of breach with Moscow, and to get any contact with Russian officials today?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I think as you know, the Russians have had a view, particularly, about the role a conference might play in sanctions resolution, and ultimately a resolution of the issue. Since we have, I believe as of yesterday, began to consult in detail with the Permanent Five members of the Security Council over our sanctions resolution. Those consultations are ongoing and certainly they're ongoing with the Russians. I really can't go into the detail of those consultations.

Q A new problem with Russia?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: What I think is that Russia and other states both the permanent and non-permanent members are going to have their own views about what ought to be in that resolution. And that is normal and usual at the United Nations when there is a resolution on the table, particularly of this type.

Q What is your understanding about what the North Koreans said about the idea of freezing their nuclear activities, the

ones in dispute -- the refueling. In a way that is something they can do on an interim basis because it's not really an issue yet? The rods are in a cooling pool for the next period of weeks or months, so it is a no-cost give-up for them? What is their position on that?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: It's indeed, as I think I indicated in my opening statement, exactly what their position is, is of real interest to us. If, as I indicated, for example, we can understand by that, and they are prepared to confirm that they will not engage in reprocessing, that is, the separation of plutonium from the fuel rods that are not in the pond, and they will not refuel the reactor and they will continue to accept IAEA continuity of safeguards inspections, then that's an interpretation that would provide a basis for a third round. But it is precisely that, that we need -- is one of the issues we need to discern.

Q You're not -- the President -- that that is specifically what President Carter was told, or were you essentially coming back to them with an additional request for --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: We took -- we understood from the message that President Carter passed to us that they were prepared to take certain steps, such as leaving the inspectors in place, allowing them to stay, and they also described their willingness in the course of a third round to address other issues that we are very interested in.

We do not yet know, cannot at this point, confirm that the elements I described to you they also meant to convey or are prepared to convey at some point in the future. It is that point, among others, that we still need to clarify.

Q In effect, you will come back with an additional condition for a third round -- the additional condition that they explicitly agree to freeze these activities?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: I would discourage you from that interpretation. What I would say is that we have, all along for a year, had a basis for a dialogue, that very recently, they undercut that basis in such a way that we were forced to return the issue to the Security Council, while telling them that it was always possible, and it must always be possible to reestablish a basis for a dialogue.

What I was doing at this point was describing to you a way in which the dialogue could be reconvened, in which we could restart it, a way that draws from, possibly, the message we received today, but not in such a way that I could say that it was part of the message, and therefore something we wished to follow up through further diplomatic contacts.

Q You were asked earlier whether you thought they were stalling, and you said you couldn't tell what their motivations were. At what point in time, though, does continuing this dialogue or this debate become hazardous in terms of their nuclear program? At what point in time are you concerned that they change the status quo?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY GALLUCCI: That's a very important question. Because as we engage in a dialogue with North Korea, that is bound to come up as we have passed the one year mark in our effort to do that. But I would draw your attention to the bases for the dialogue once again. And that is that there be no separation of plutonium, that they maintain the continuity of safeguards, and as I indicated, they not refuel the reactor.

What I'm telling you is, over the last year, as this administration has tried to pursue a dialogue with the North Koreans,

we have had a basis for the dialogue which assured that not a single additional gram of plutonium would be separated. It is our intent, if we resume that dialogue now, that there not be a single additional gram of plutonium produced. That's what happens when you don't refuel the reactor.

So I'm -- at this moment, depending upon, again, what the meaning of the message is today, I'm not concerned about a stalling tactic that disadvantages us. I think over the longer term, certainly we do insist, as we said last year, on achieving some progress, because they are right now in violation of IAEA safeguards commitments, they're in violation of the Nonproliferation Treaty commitments. The Security Council can expect to take up that issue unless there is an ongoing diplomatic effort aimed at its resolution. We are moving to the Security Council now because that diplomatic effort was put aside because of what the North Koreans did.

What may be happening now is there may be a basis to reengage. That's what we'll have to explore. Thank you very much.

END

5:05 P.M. EDT

STATEMENT OF PRESIDENT WILLIAM J. CLINTON

Regarding North Korea

June 16, 1994

In recent weeks, we have been consulting with our allies and friends on the imposition of sanctions against North Korea because of its refusal to permit full inspections of its nuclear program. Today there are reports the North Koreans may be offering new steps to resolve the international community's concerns. As we review these reports, I want to take a moment to explain the extent of America's interests and the steps we are taking to protect them.

Our nation has vital interests at stake on the Korean Peninsula. Four decades after the conflict there that claimed hundreds of thousands of American and South Korean lives, South Korea continues to face the threat of a million troops, most massed near its border. America's commitment to protect South Korea -- our treaty ally, trading partner and fellow democracy -- is unshakable.

We have some 37,000 American troops in Korea to maintain that commitment, and their safety is of vital importance to us. We have an interest in preserving the stability of the Asian Pacific region. We have a compelling interest in preventing the global spread of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Nine years ago, North Korea signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, pledging it to permit international inspections of its nuclear program and to refrain from developing nuclear weapons. In 1991, it also agreed with South Korea to achieve a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula.

In recent years, however, North Korea has broken its commitments. It has obstructed inspections of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency. And on June 3, the IAEA reported irreparable damage to the Agency's ability to use a key method to verify North Korea's past nuclear activity. That report triggered our current effort to seek sanctions.

In response to North Korea's nuclear efforts, we have consistently pursued two goals: a non-nuclear Korean peninsula and a strong international nonproliferation regime. We have made serious and extensive efforts to resolve the North Korean issue through negotiations, and have given North Korea every opportunity to return to compliance with its nonproliferation commitments.

We have made clear that these negotiations could continue only if North Korea cooperated with the IAEA and did not deepen its violation of international nuclear safeguards.

We also are seeing to the security of our troops and our allies.

The current tensions are the result of North Korea's own actions -- not those of the United States or the international community. North Korea must choose: it can return to the path of compliance, or it can continue toward greater confrontation and isolation.

If today's developments mean that North Korea is genuinely and verifiably prepared to freeze its nuclear program, then we would be willing to resume high-level talks. In the meantime, we will keep pursuing sanctions.

In recent days, I have consulted with President Kim of South Korea, Prime Minister Hata of Japan, President Yeltsin of Russia and others. I will continue to consult closely on this issue with them, with other international leaders and with the Congress. Through all appropriate means, I will keep working to ensure the security of South Korea, the safety of our troops, the stability of the Asian Pacific and the protection of our nation and our friends and allies from the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

With all that is at stake, we will pursue our interests with resolve and steadiness of purpose.