

1

2

3

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

4

5

6

2019 CARNEGIE INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR POLICY CONFERENCE

7

8

9

A CONVERSATION WITH U.S. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

10

STEPHEN BIEGUN

11

12

13

Washington, D.C.

14

15

16

Monday, March 11, 2019

17

18

19

20

21

22

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22

A P P E A R A N C E S

STEPHEN BIEGUN

U.S. Special Representative for North Korea

HELENE COOPER

Pentagon Correspondent, New York Times

1 as I would have hoped coming in on the first day, we
2 stay closely engaged with our counterparts in North
3 Korea. And we just came off of a summit meeting in
4 Hanoi where President Trump and Chairman Kim Jong-un
5 spent 2 days together discussing some very weighty
6 issues. And the President said in his press
7 conference, and it's true, that we remain engaged, the
8 doors is open, and we will continue to work with the
9 North Koreans to try to achieve our shared goal of the
10 complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Our
11 goal, final fully verified denuclearization.

12 But let me frame it a little bit more broadly,
13 Helene, so you have a sense of what we've been up to
14 for the last 6 months as well. So the President held
15 his summit with Chairman Kim on June 12, 2018, so about
16 8 months ago. And out of that summit meeting the 2
17 leaders agreed to a joint statement that laid out 4
18 areas that we would work together in order to try to
19 advance a better outcome for the Korean Peninsula.

20 The first was to transform relations between
21 the U.S. and the DPRK. The second was to work towards
22 a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. The

1 third was the complete denuclearization of the Korean
2 Peninsula. And the fourth was to recover the remains
3 of those who fell on the Korean War, and that remains a
4 very important priority.

5 Since June of 2018 we've had steady engagement
6 with the North Koreans. Secretary Pompeo made his
7 first trip after the summit to Pyongyang in July of
8 2018. He spent an entire day with his counterpart, Kim
9 Yong-chol, a Senior North Korean official who Chairman
10 Kim has appointed as his primary -- Secretary Pompeo's
11 primary counterpart. Those meetings were tough. They
12 were the first time where we started to try to put
13 detail into the agreements, particularly around
14 denuclearization. And while those meetings didn't
15 produce a certain outcome, they set the stage for many
16 of the future discussions that have taken place after
17 that.

18 In August is when I started with the State
19 Department, August 23rd. And I started -- the 2 days
20 after I started, the Secretary and I were scheduled to
21 visit North Korea for the Secretary's next visit. The
22 President in reviewing the circumstances around that

1 trip made a determination that North Korea probably
2 wasn't yet ready to make some of the commitments we
3 were looking for, and he asked the Secretary of State
4 to postpone that trip and the Secretary did. In
5 February the Secretary traveled to the UN General
6 Assembly in New York and he and I had a very good
7 meeting with the foreign minister of North Korea, Ri
8 Yong-ho, where we covered a number of issues. Although
9 Foreign Minister Ri was quite clear that the
10 denuclearization issues were not going to be in his
11 portfolio at present, that they were assigned to Kim
12 Yong-chol from the United Front Department of the
13 Korean workers' party.

14 In October, Secretary Pompeo was invited to
15 Pyongyang a second time. He and I went to Pyongyang in
16 5th of October, spent an entire day with Chairman Kim
17 Jong-un, with his sister Kim Yo-jong. Some of the day
18 was spent with Kim Yong-chol. And again, we had a
19 chance to surface a lot of the very important issues
20 around all four commitments that the two leaders made
21 in the Singapore joint statement.

22 Going into November it was our expectation

1 that we would have a final framing meeting and really
2 the kickoff of working level talks. And that was
3 scheduled for the first part of November. And a few
4 days before that meeting we received a word from North
5 Korea that there were scheduling issues, that they had
6 other issues that were complicating their participation
7 and they asked for a postponement of that meeting. We
8 don't know the full circumstances around that. And
9 like so much else about North Korea, even with the
10 incredible resources we have available to us we had to
11 engage in some speculation as was what was happening.

12 At the same time North Korea was disengaging
13 also from China, from Russia, from South Korea. And
14 we're not quite sure what happened and what transpired
15 inside North Korea during the months of November and
16 December. But whatever it was it's like a switch came
17 back on in late December partially driven, in fact
18 really driven by an exchange of letters between
19 President Trump and Chairman Kim.

20 We began to see tightened up engagement
21 between us and the North Koreans that flowed into
22 Chairman Kim's New Year's address. In his New Year's

1 address, which is their equivalent of the State of the
2 Union address, Chairman Kim reaffirmed his commitment
3 both to denuclearization as well as to transferring the
4 resources and his economy to developing -- in his
5 country to develop the domestic economy. Those
6 messages were reassuring and they set in motion a
7 series of visits that have had us engaged with North
8 Koreans almost nonstop since the New Year.

9 Kim Yong-chol, the Secretary's counterpart
10 came here in mid-January, spent a full day with the
11 Secretary. He also spent and had an extended visit
12 with President Trump in the Oval Office. They covered
13 lot of topics. At that same visit in mid-January I was
14 introduced to my new counterpart recently appointed,
15 the special representative for the United States. So a
16 direct mirror of my portfolio here in the U.S., and his
17 name was Kim Yong-chol. And during that visit in mid-
18 January we had our first working level negotiations,
19 six months after the Singapore summit.

20 But we were finally engaged by mid-November,
21 excuse me, mid-January in rather intense discussions
22 with the North Koreans framing out an agenda for

1 discussions and a schedule for discussions. And also
2 during the course of that meeting in mid-January the
3 decision was made to proceed with a second summit
4 meeting at the end of February in Vietnam.

5 So working toward that, I took a team of
6 experts and scientists, international law experts,
7 negotiators to Pyongyang in early February. We spent
8 several days in Pyongyang, engaged with our North
9 Korean counterparts, again further framing out a set of
10 issues that we -- both sides would like to advance in
11 the framework of the joint statement that came out of
12 the Singapore summit.

13 We broke briefly and then returned to meet
14 again in Hanoi where we met for several days in the run
15 up to the summit and then participated in the summit
16 meeting between the two leaders. The point I want to
17 make with that framing is that we have been closely
18 engaged with the North Koreans especially over the last
19 couple of months, and certainly our expectation will be
20 able to continue that close engagement in order to
21 advance the shared goals of the 2 leaders as expressed
22 in the Singapore summit.

1 MS. COOPER: Okay. Well, thanks for the
2 framing, and I'm glad that you bring up the sort of the
3 relaunch of talks in January, because the January
4 timeframe is sort of what I wanted to start speaking
5 with you about.

6 In your Stanford speech, back in January, you
7 seem to suggest that you, the United States was totally
8 open to confidence building steps. And there is
9 certainly -- one of the things, you know, as soon as,
10 I've been getting a lot of tweets from people and
11 questions from people wanting to direct to you the
12 whole idea of whether or not the American stance is
13 hardening, because in your Stanford speech you said,
14 "From our side we are prepared to discuss many actions
15 that could help build trust between our 2 countries and
16 advance further progress in parallel on the Singapore
17 summit objectives -- objectives of transforming
18 relations, establishing a permanent peace regime on the
19 Peninsula and complete denuclearization," you said
20 that. And that sounds totally -- that sounds like a --
21 an opening for negotiations.

22 But last week a senior administration official

1 said this at the State Department, "Nobody in the
2 administration advocates a step-by-step approach. In
3 all cases expectations is complete denuclearization of
4 North Korea as a condition for all other steps. That's
5 a position supported by the entire inter-agency."

6 Which is it?

7 MR. BIEGUN: It's -- so the semantic
8 differences I have to say escape me. All four of these
9 priorities are linked. The United States is interested
10 in transforming relations with the DPRK. United States
11 is interested in advancing a permanent peace regime
12 with North Korea. United States is absolutely
13 interested in pursuing denuclearization with North
14 Korea. And the fourth pillar, as I mentioned, the
15 return of remains very much remains a high priority for
16 us as well. They're all linked. They're all
17 proceeding in parallel.

18 The United States has discussed many
19 initiatives in each of these areas with the North
20 Koreans, but as is so often the case that nothing can
21 be agreed until everything is agreed. That's a clear
22 principle that has permeated our negotiations on both

1 sides with the North Koreans.

2 That's not to say that we can't take steps to
3 build confidence between the two countries. But the
4 foundation of this policy is denuclearization. And
5 until we can get to some point where we have the same
6 traction on that issue that we have on the other
7 issues, that makes it very difficult for us to move
8 forward.

9 You've heard the President himself talk about
10 many of the issues that would build confidence. And
11 most recently at the summit he had an exchange in front
12 of the press on this very point. These are issues that
13 we have explored in detail with our North Koreans in
14 parallel with denuclearization. But we're just not
15 there on denuclearization, and that's -- that was the
16 issue at the summit that really challenged us to move
17 forward with a more complete agreement.

18 We've closed some gaps. As the President and
19 the Secretary said, we had a very constructive
20 discussion, but we're not there yet. And that's the
21 place where we need to, really need to exert the most
22 effort to see if we can advance an agenda that achieves

1 all of these issues in parallel, not just in isolation.

2 MS. COOPER: But I think that's where there's
3 some confusion. Are you saying then that you -- that
4 the United States is going to do this incrementally?
5 And if you don't do this incrementally how can you get
6 it all done? Why should North Korea believe that at
7 the end of this rainbow we'll get a pot of gold?

8 MR. BIEGUN: Yeah. We are not going to do
9 denuclearization incrementally. The President has been
10 clear on that and that is a position around which the
11 U.S. government has complete unity. Our goal, our
12 objective is the final fully verified denuclearization
13 of North Korea.

14 One of the reasons we were unable to reach a
15 final agreement in Hanoi was, as the President laid
16 out, the North Koreans had offered a portion of their
17 nuclear program in a sense in exchange for lifting
18 basically all the sanctions against North Korea.

19 In effect, that would have put us in a
20 position where we and presumably the international
21 community, because these are United Nations Security
22 Council sanctions, not United Nations sanctions, we

1 would be in a position where we would be lifting all
2 the economic pressure that's been imposed upon North
3 Korea for the totality of its weapons of mass
4 destruction programs. We'd lift that pressure, but in
5 exchange for only a portion of those weapons of mass
6 destruction programs. That would have put us in a
7 position, a very difficult position of essentially
8 subsidizing what would potentially be ongoing
9 development of weapons of mass destruction in North
10 Korea. We need a total solution.

11 This is why the President, this is what the
12 President brought to the table and this is what the
13 President has sincerely conveyed to Chairman Kim Jong-
14 un. The United States is ready to go down this road
15 with North Korea to transform relations, to create a
16 permanent peace regime, to denuclearize and also to
17 close some of the humanitarian issues like the return
18 of remains, but North Korea has to be committed.

19 And what the President -- as the President
20 said at his press conference, he challenged Chairman
21 Kim to go big, to buy into the vision, to do this
22 together with us. I know the North Koreans found that

1 difficult to accept. Obviously we didn't get to a
2 point at the summit in Hanoi where we could have
3 reached an agreement on that broad framework. But
4 we're prepared to continue trying. The door is open to
5 diplomacy.

6 We want a very different future for the United
7 States and North Korea on the Korean Peninsula. And
8 the President is 100 percent supportive of us remaining
9 engaged diplomatically to try to achieve that goal.
10 The gap is still just a little bit too large for us to
11 get there today.

12 MS. COOPER: I'm going to try this one -- a
13 slightly different way because you are certainly aware
14 that there is a narrative that is out there right now
15 that National Security Advisor John Bolton has now got
16 a hold of the process and that the United States'
17 position has hardened considerably. Are you saying
18 that we -- the Trump administration position has not
19 hardened?

20 MR. BIEGUN: No. The Trump administration
21 position is not hardened. From the very beginning the
22 U.S. view has been to achieve the final fully verified

1 denuclearization of North Korea. The President on down
2 (phonetic) have said that the lifting of sanctions will
3 come with attaining that goal. That's not to say that
4 we can't continue to talk with the North Koreans and
5 that there aren't other areas we can explore outside of
6 the lifting of sanctions that can potentially advance
7 all the Singapore commitments the two leaders made, but
8 there has absolutely been no difference in -- or
9 distinction in the U.S. policy on denuclearization.

10 I will say that I have -- I am acutely aware
11 that I inherited a portfolio that for 25 years has been
12 mired in political disagreements, in policy differences
13 and also has a fairly miserable record of achievement.
14 We started this diplomacy with North Korea with the
15 agreed framework in the early 1990s and one can debate
16 why each subsequent initiative failed and who was at
17 fault, but you can't deny the outcome.

18 Starting in 1994, really starting in 1992 when
19 the North and the South agreed to not pursue nuclear
20 weapons on the Korean Peninsula racing forward 27 years
21 to today we have a nuclear weapons state on the Korean
22 Peninsula. So the policies have been a failure. The

1 Trump administration's policy is to push very hard
2 across all fronts. We want to build confidence, we
3 want to build trust, we want to end the war, which is
4 currently in abeyance with the 1953 armistice. We want
5 to heal the wounds of war. We want to recover the
6 remains of the soldiers very much for the same reasons
7 that that helped us normalize relations in other places
8 like Vietnam at the end of the conflict. It's all part
9 of a total strategy. But it does require North Korea
10 to be fully committed to the elimination of its weapons
11 of mass destruction and that's what the President was
12 challenging Kim Jong-un, to buy into that vision
13 completely. And if they do, as the President has said,
14 we will exceed their expectations in what we can
15 achieve together on the Korean Peninsula.

16 MS. COOPER: You guys all know that we're
17 going to be taking questions in a very complicated
18 iPad-related manner in a few minutes. My former
19 colleague, Michael Gordon, didn't trust this, so he e-
20 mailed me a question he wanted me to get in. And I
21 want to -- I want to read this e-mail from Gordon
22 because it gets to the point that you're talking about.

1 And it gets again to the, are we moving the goal post
2 issue. "President Trump has repeatedly stated publicly
3 that he has no fixed timeline for completing the
4 negotiations with North Korea and is not in a rush to
5 denuclearize North Korea as long as Pyongyang does not
6 conduct nuclear missile tests. At UNGA in September,
7 Mr. Trump said, "I don't want to get into the time
8 game. If it takes 2 years, 3 years or 5 months it
9 doesn't matter. There's no nuclear testing and there's
10 no testing of rockets." But last Thursday the senior
11 State Department official said that the goal was to
12 denuclearize North Korea and eliminated -- eliminate
13 the North ICBMs during Mr. Trump's current term in
14 office. Who is right, President Trump or the senior
15 State Department official?"

16 MR. BIEGUN: So the President has not set an
17 artificial time limit on this process, that's
18 absolutely right. In question to how long would it
19 take us, we stand by the expectation that if we fully
20 mobilized our resources and if we worked with the North
21 Koreans and not had to do this over their objection,
22 that we could align our ourselves in a manner

1 sufficient to achieve this in something approaching a
2 year. We continue to push for this process to begin.
3 And it has been said many times that this will be
4 something that we would like to get done in the
5 President's first term. But ultimately it requires the
6 North Koreans to start early (phonetic). And that's
7 the missing variable right now, is that the North
8 Koreans have to be similarly bought into that
9 objective. And so the pressure is not on us, and I
10 think that's implicit in what the President is saying.

11 The United States has preserved all of the
12 pressure of its international sanctions coming out of
13 the Hanoi summit. And the international sanctions are
14 actually quite tough and continue to put significant
15 hardship on the Korean economy. At a minimum this
16 limits the resources that could be available to divert
17 the weapons of mass destruction programs, but in the
18 best case also it creates the right combination of
19 incentives for North Korea to choose this path.

20 The President has been also very clear about
21 sanctions. He doesn't desire to impose or sustain
22 sanctions against North Korea. He'd like to have us in

1 a position where we can lift them, but we have to get
2 the North Koreans to begin that process of
3 denuclearization. There is no artificial timetable on
4 this. It doesn't have to be done by x date and we
5 won't be driven by an artificial timetable. Key here,
6 again the missing variable is North Korea has to be
7 fully invested in the final fully verified
8 denuclearization.

9 We've discussed that with them, we've
10 discussed what that means with the North Koreans. They
11 understand our point of view. And we're going to
12 continue to work to see if we can close the gaps and
13 reach a common approach on that. We weren't able to do
14 that at the summit in Hanoi and so we'll continue to
15 work at it and see if we can get there as soon as
16 possible.

17 MS. COOPER: Okay. What do the North Koreans
18 mean when they say close Yongbyon? There is some
19 confusion about what exactly that might mean. I mean
20 you had working level talks in Hanoi before Trump
21 arrived. How do you think that -- do you -- do both
22 sides agree on what exactly, do both sides have a clear

1 understanding of what exactly that means?

2 MR. BIEGUN: So we have no agreement to close
3 Yongbyon. Let me just state that upfront. So there is
4 no agreed approach to anything related to Yongbyon at
5 present. But that's a good question and it's the right
6 question you asked, because Yongbyon can be many
7 different things.

8 MS. COOPER: Yes.

9 MR. BIEGUN: Yongbyon in the 2008 declaration
10 as part of the six-party talks was a plutonium reactor
11 and a plutonium reprocessing facility. We also know
12 that at -- over the course of that decade that the
13 North Koreans had developed a undeclared highly
14 enriched uranium capability at Yongbyon. And so
15 obviously the production of fissile material at
16 Yongbyon comes from both a uranium facility as well as
17 a plutonium facility, both of which are usable in the
18 development of nuclear weapons.

19 The Yongbyon is much more than that too.

20 Yongbyon is a whole industrial complex involved in the
21 nuclear fuel cycle and nuclear weapons development in
22 North Korea. Consists of dozens if not hundreds of

1 facilities spread across a large area that is
2 generically referred to as Yongbyon. What we're asking
3 the North Koreans to do in the process of
4 denuclearization is to eliminate all dimensions of the
5 nuclear fuel cycle and the nuclear weapons program.
6 And so our definition of Yongbyon would be quite
7 expansive.

8 In our discussions with the North Koreans -- I
9 won't go into every detail of how they have chosen to
10 describe Yongbyon, but let me just say, you know, in
11 general it's been shifting. Things like this are why
12 it is so important that in the denuclearization process
13 you also have an accompanying declaration. We need to
14 agree on the definition of the North Korean weapons
15 programs. We can begin some elements of the
16 denuclearization before that declaration is complete.
17 In the case of the 2008 declaration it took
18 approximately 9 months to generate it.

19 And if the North Koreans are willing to
20 proceed immediately with steps to begin addressing
21 elements of their weapons of mass destruction program,
22 we won't hold up for that. But we do have to have a

1 complete declaration. An industrial site like Yongbyon
2 illustrates exactly why it's so important that we agree
3 on the full set of capabilities and also the hold --
4 what they hold as a consequence of their complex of
5 weapons of mass destruction.

6 MS. COOPER: I'm going to try to resist asking
7 you to channel the mind of Kim Jong-un. But it's a
8 little difficult and I've been trying to restrain
9 myself. There have been some missile launch site
10 activity recently which U.S. satellites has picked up.
11 What do you think Kim is trying to signal with this?

12 MR. BIEGUN: So I think you're referring to
13 the -- some of the --

14 MS. COOPER: Sohae.

15 MR. BIEGUN: -- some of the open source
16 reporting that didn't show a missile launch, it shows
17 activities at some of the sites that have traditionally
18 been involved with their rocket and/or missile
19 programs. And so just, you know, I think you and I
20 would agree, Helene, it's very important that we be
21 precise --

22 MR. BIEGUN: Yes.

1 MR. BIEGUN: -- when we talk about things.
2 North Korea has not launched a missile, that's not --

3 MS. COOPER: No, but there is activity there
4 like this.

5 MR. BIEGUN: Right, there is activity, right.
6 So the short answer is we don't know. And what Kim
7 Jong-un will decide to do, you know, may very much be
8 his decision and his decision alone. We have -- I
9 think the President has made abundantly clear what our
10 point of view is on that. The President's statements
11 last week that he would be disappointed, very
12 disappointed if in fact this happened. And we don't
13 know that it's intended to send any particular
14 statement to us.

15 You know, one of the things -- I
16 mentioned that I'm acutely aware that I've inherited a
17 portfolio of issues that is steeped in 25 years of a
18 difficult policy battles and politics. But also there
19 is a phenomena that I would observe around the North
20 Korean issues, and that's of the snap judgment of so
21 many experts to drive to an immediate conclusion about
22 anything that's happening in North Korea.

1 So two instances I would cite that aren't
2 entirely dissimilar from this where we also don't know.
3 So some time during the fall last year the North
4 Koreans surprised the world with a press report that
5 they had just completed the successful test of an
6 advanced tactical weapon. So tactical, so they were
7 signaling in their own wording that that was not a
8 strategic weapon, which would imply weapons of mass
9 destruction.

10 And I was astounded by the immediate analysis
11 that this was a message to the United States, that this
12 was the end of diplomacy, that this was a provocation
13 directed at us. And here we are probably 4, 5 months
14 later. I don't think there is an expert alive who can
15 even tell me what they tested or if they tested
16 anything. All they released was a picture of Chairman
17 Kim Jong-un standing on a beach in a coastal area
18 surrounded by men in uniform, holding notepads writing
19 notes.

20 And in a large part of the analysts and the
21 commentary we're immediately interpreting this as a
22 message directly at the President, directly at the

1 United States. To this day we don't know what that
2 entailed. The more recent example is last week while
3 speculation was building about what's happening around
4 Sohae and some of the other sites traditionally
5 associated with North Korean nuclear and -- excuse me,
6 missile and rocket tests. There was a seismic event
7 that the press reported was measured somewhere north of
8 the DMZ at some level on the Richter scale of
9 approximately 2.0.

10 And immediately I saw messages, I saw
11 headlines and analysis that this was a statement coming
12 out of Hanoi summit. There was even some implication
13 against defiance of all analytical evidence that this
14 could have been a nuclear test. And it just -- it
15 continues to boggle my mind how quickly so many are
16 pressing to reach conclusions about all this.

17 MS. COOPER: You think the press is beating
18 the war drum beat?

19 MR. BIEGUN: It's, you know, it's a
20 competition in the 24 hour news cycle, but it's not
21 just the press, it's the think tank and the analytical
22 community as well. If you read the analysis in the run

1 up to the Hanoi summit and you were sitting where I was
2 sitting, you would think a lot of it was completely
3 detached from reality on what was being speculated and
4 provided as fact. Now that's just -- that's an
5 operational challenge that is going to exist in any
6 important international diplomatic endeavor like this.
7 Added to it is the fact that there is multiple national
8 interests at play here.

9 So I wouldn't lay any blame and I won't say
10 anybody is pressuring us. I just say that the tendency
11 to reach these snap conclusions is in my view a little
12 bit hasty. And I will say that we take very seriously
13 what the reports that we've seen about what's happening
14 at Sohae and we're watching it. As some of my
15 colleagues in the administration had said, we have the
16 resources to do that and we don't need to depend upon
17 commercial satellite photography.

18 But I will say that let's see how it plays
19 out. Right now I don't know what message they are
20 trying to send. We certainly have sent our message
21 loudly and clearly from the President of United States
22 that we would not think that that would be a productive

1 step for them to test a rocket or missile.

2 MS. COOPER: Okay. Some of the reporting that
3 came out of Hanoi suggested that we've now added
4 chemical and biological weapons developments at the
5 table in the negotiations, have we? And again this
6 again gets back to the whole moving the goal post thing
7 that we keep -- I keep harping on?

8 MR. BIEGUN: Yeah. So since the day I arrived
9 and adopted this portfolio, the effort to bring a more
10 permanent peace to the Korean Peninsula has involved
11 the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction. It
12 would hardly make sense to remove the threat of nuclear
13 weapons from North Korea and endorse the continued
14 presence of chemical and biological weapons. It would
15 be unacceptable to us, it would be unacceptable to
16 North Korea's neighbors, including Russia, China, Japan
17 and South Korea.

18 But also it -- to suggest it's moving the goal
19 post is in defiance of the factual history of the issue
20 of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction programs.
21 If you read the UN Security Council resolutions, they
22 are as pointed on the issues of chemical and biological

1 weapons as they are on nuclear weapons. And ultimately
2 the process of final fully verified denuclearization is
3 to set the antecedent for the lifting of those
4 sanctions. Those sanctions, which are international
5 sanctions imposed unanimously by the UN Security
6 Council would also look to the elimination of
7 biological and chemical weapons programs as part of the
8 complete process that we're undertaking.

9 So this issue is one that we've discussed with
10 the North Koreans, it is not new, and it would be a
11 very serious oversight on our part to leave any weapons
12 of mass destruction out of the equation if we truly are
13 going to be successful in transforming the Korean
14 Peninsula in order to have a much more peaceful and
15 engaged relationship, not only between the United
16 States and North Korea, but between North Korea and all
17 of its neighbors.

18 You know, Helene, we talk a lot about the
19 challenges of the diplomacy, about the need to decipher
20 opaque messages that are sent to us and also about the
21 complexities that are involved in this process which
22 generically is called denuclearization, but really is

1 the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and
2 their means of delivery. But I also think we need to
3 focus just as much on the positive possibilities too.
4 The diplomatic engagement between the United States and
5 North Korea since June of last year has not been
6 without its results.

7 Yes, the President has frequently cited the
8 moratorium the North Koreans have on nuclear missile
9 tests as well as the partial dismantlement of Sohae and
10 Tongchang or Tongchang-ri as it's called and also
11 Punggye-ri. And while these steps aren't permanent and
12 irreversible as the news accounts for the last few days
13 have sent us, they also are not inconsequential
14 entirely. They offer some insight into the direction
15 that we believe North Korea is willing to take. And
16 what we need to see them do is go further down the
17 road. But outside that there has been much else as
18 well.

19 The United States is more engaged with North
20 Korea diplomatically right now than we have been in the
21 past decade. We are deeply engaged in a regularized
22 contact that I laid out a little bit in my framing

1 remarks upfront. And the North Koreans are also
2 involved in outreach with their neighbors, with China,
3 with a halting discussion with Japan, and with South
4 Korea. And the South Koreans and the North Koreans are
5 working very closely also to try to lower hostilities
6 on the Korean Peninsula and create an opening for the
7 full vision that President Trump laid out at Singapore
8 to come fruition. I have traveled recently to the
9 demilitarized zone in North Korea. The demilitarized
10 zone was affected by a number of confidence-building
11 measures that were negotiated between Chairman Kim and
12 President Moon Jae-in of South Korea late last year in
13 consultation with the United Nations Command and the
14 U.S. Forces Korea.

15 They've done a number of -- taken a number of
16 steps around the demilitarized zone in order to lower
17 tensions. The elimination of all weapons has been
18 implemented in the joint security area around Panmunjom
19 village. It's a remarkable thing. And for those of
20 you who are in Korea or have the opportunity to visit
21 the DMZ, I would strong commend it.

22 I think some of the details are still being

1 worked out in the final arrangements in the DMZ. I had
2 heard from someone recently that it's not so easy to
3 travel there until all the remaining issues are
4 implemented around this set of agreements. But I was
5 able to visit. And I'll tell you, just palpable
6 difference from anything I've seen since I first
7 visited the DMZ in 1988. Over those 31 years we have
8 gone from a feeling of two armies brisling with weapons
9 poised on a very narrow buffer on the Korean Peninsula
10 to a more calm and orderly and engagement. There is
11 regular communications between the North, South, and
12 between -- and with the UN Command in the DMZ.

13 You know these are not inconsequential changes
14 that have taken place on the Korean Peninsula. So as
15 we focus on the urgency of this particular issue or the
16 crisis or potential crisis du jour, I think we also
17 need to step back and realize that over the past 8
18 months President Trump's diplomacy with North Korea and
19 South Korea's diplomacy with North Korea have created
20 space for many constructive things to happen.

21 And while we're a long way away from where we
22 need to be, and as I said at the beginning of my

1 remarks, we're not nearly as far long on
2 denuclearization as I would have hoped we are. You
3 know, we're making progress. We're still engaged
4 diplomatically, the door remains open, the President
5 was emphatic on this point coming out of the Hanoi
6 summit. The conversations were constructive. They
7 ended without an agreement, but they didn't end badly.
8 And so I don't want to lose sight of the positives in
9 this environment as we focused on the particular issues
10 or controversies or semantics of the moment.

11 MS. COOPER: That's a lovely wrap-up. And if
12 I was a nicer person, I would now open it up to
13 questions. But I have a couple more of my own that I
14 want to squeeze in there. I think at this point I'm
15 supposed to tell you guys that the app, whatever we're
16 doing here is open and you can send in your stuff. It
17 says incorrect password, so I don't even know if this
18 is going to work. This isn't working.

19 But in the meantime, you brought up steps that
20 we've taken, one of them, you know, I couldn't sit here
21 as a Pentagon reporter and not ask you about the
22 suspension, the continued suspension of military

1 exercises with -- between the United States and South
2 Korea in the peninsula. President Trump himself has
3 called them expensive and provocative. How do you see
4 this continued suspension playing part or -- what kind
5 of role do you think that this continues to put in your
6 negotiations? You know the people at the Pentagon
7 don't like this.

8 MR. BIEGUN: Yeah. So what the President said
9 is -- and this is a unilateral policy, but the
10 President is committed to it, it is that he has
11 suspended major joint military exercises between the
12 United States and South Korea and -- or as he would
13 refer to them as war games. And that remains the
14 policy. The President reaffirmed it from the podium --

15 MS. COOPER: The war games thing really got
16 them at the Pentagon because they really don't like
17 that.

18 MR. BIEGUN: The President reaffirmed that
19 point from the podium in Hanoi when he did his press
20 conference. But I will also say that I think the
21 Pentagon has done a fantastic job of working within the
22 parameters of that policy --

1 MS. COOPER: Because we continue to do the
2 military exercises, we just don't call them that.

3 MR. BIEGUN: To make sure we do the necessary
4 military training that any responsible decision-maker
5 at the Pentagon would want to undertake. You know, we
6 do -- militaries have to train. We have 28,500 U.S.
7 soldiers on the Korean Peninsula and they need to be
8 prepared always to defend the mission that's been
9 assigned to them.

10 My job from the Department of State is to give
11 them the diplomacy they deserve. General Robert
12 Abrams, our commander of U.S. Forces Korea and the head
13 of United Nations Command, his job is to make sure
14 they're ready. President's job is to set the policy
15 for the United States of America. And the President
16 has done that clearly, unambiguously. And
17 notwithstanding what you're hearing, my view is that
18 he's fully supported by his advisors and that they have
19 within the parameters of that developed an approach to
20 training our forces that is acceptable. So, you know,
21 I think we're in a good place.

22 MS. COOPER: I'm going to be going to

1 questions shortly. But just one, I would be remised if
2 I didn't ask you. Why in light of the Trump
3 administration's withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal,
4 why would the North -- this goes back to the issue of
5 trust, why would North Korea feel comfortable at all in
6 striking an agreement with the United States?

7 MR. BIEGUN: So I'm not expert on the JCPOA,
8 although -- and much of that was -- all of that was
9 negotiated during a period when I wasn't serving in
10 government. But I would make an observation as a
11 layman, which is probably somewhat dangerous since I'm
12 no longer a layman. And that is that my sense is the
13 JCPOA failed for a number of reasons, including the
14 fact that once it was put in place it appeared at least
15 to me from the outside that Iran doubled-down on its
16 aggressive behavior in the region.

17 MS. COOPER: But this wasn't an Iran nuclear
18 deal. It wasn't a deal about Iran and funding
19 Hezbollah and anything like that. This was a nuclear
20 deal.

21 MR. BIEGUN: Okay.

22 MS. COOPER: It did not renege on the nuclear

1 obligations.

2 MR. BIEGUN: I didn't say they reneged on it.
3 You're asking me how the North Koreans would see that
4 differently. Let me tell you how they would see it
5 differently, Helene. What we're engaged with the North
6 Koreans is much bigger than denuclearization. Although
7 the denuclearization is the foundation for the policies
8 and it's ultimately the test of whether or not we're
9 going to be successful, the President is also committed
10 to transforming relations, creating a permanent peace
11 regime on the Korean Peninsula and also an agenda to
12 close and heal the wounds of a war that happened almost
13 7 years ago.

14 President Trump's vision is much bigger than
15 the very narrow vision in the agreed framework. And it
16 seems to me it's not a flaw of the agreed framework,
17 it's a flaw of the diplomacy with Iran. The
18 presumption that we could reach a narrowly focused
19 denuclearization agreement regardless of what you think
20 about the merits of it. And at the same time the
21 relationship will develop in a manner that was
22 successful while Iran was doubling down on aggressive

1 behavior around the region and around the world.

2 And so what's different is that this is a much
3 larger vision than what was encompassed in the JCPOA.
4 That doesn't mean it's going to be easier. And
5 ultimately whatever we do in this diplomacy will have
6 to pass the test of public opinion. And ultimately
7 we'll have to pass the test of support in the United
8 States Congress. That's another flaw of the JCPOA
9 agreement. Is it's a shortcut to bypass the Congress.
10 And the JCPOA did it and the Agreed Framework did it
11 too for that matter and it makes them much less
12 terrible.

13 So if I were coaching the North Koreans, I
14 would say do the right thing, denuclearize, engage in
15 this full agenda, shift the momentum of the entire 70-
16 year history of war and hostility on the Korean
17 Peninsula to one in which the United States and North
18 Korea are engaged toward a much brighter future.
19 That's what we're working on. That's what we're doing
20 in parallel. That's all the things we're doing.

21 It's not at the expense of denuclearization.
22 That is the foundation for our policy and that will

1 ultimately be the test to success. But our vision is
2 bigger than that too.

3 MS. COOPER: Okay. I'm ready to ask your
4 questions. Jeff Brumfield (phonetic) --

5 MR. BIEGUN: You sound skeptical.

6 MS. COOPER: I'm not skeptical at all. From
7 Jeff Brumfield, "Can you tell us your understanding of
8 what the North Koreans offered in Hanoi? And if the
9 North agreed to more limited sanctions relief in
10 exchange for Yongbyon, would you be receptive?"

11 MR. BIEGUN: The -- so ultimately it was the
12 President's decision in Hanoi. And I think like
13 virtually all -- all of his advisors, I think we had a
14 pretty good understanding of what the North Koreans
15 were proposing. And what the North Koreans were
16 proposing is to eliminate some portion of their nuclear
17 weapons program in exchange for the lifting of
18 basically all sanctions.

19 Now whether that portion -- that really
20 doesn't rest upon the definition of Yongbyon.
21 Although, as I said earlier even over the course of the
22 last few weeks and months, North Korea has had a

1 shifting definition of what Yongbyon is. But really
2 the question is would the United States lift the
3 sanctions against North Korea in exchange for closing
4 down part of its nuclear fuel cycle, part of its
5 weapons of mass destruction programs and allow the
6 attended benefits to flow in a manner that in some
7 cases might directly subsidize the ongoing development
8 of weapons of mass destruction in nondisclosed or
9 noncommitted parts of the weapons program.

10 And the administration has been clear from the
11 President on down that we will not lift these sanctions
12 until North Korea completes the process of
13 denuclearization. That's been the President's policy
14 for a very long time, that didn't change at Yongbyon
15 and -- excuse me, didn't change at Hanoi and hasn't
16 changed now.

17 MS. COOPER: Can I ask you briefly, and this
18 is a little bit off the topic. But can I ask you about
19 Otto Warmbier.

20 MR. BIEGUN: Uh-huh.

21 MS. COOPER: This gets back to the whole issue
22 of trust again. How do you as a negotiator deal with a

1 leader who apparently said to our President that he
2 knew nothing about the torture, what happened to Otto
3 Warmbier and how does that affect your ability to trust
4 what comes out of KJU going forward?

5 MR. BIEGUN: Yeah. So the real question
6 underneath that, Helene, is bigger, which is how do you
7 negotiate with the leader of a system like North Korea
8 because that's a bigger question, but it's all subsumed
9 in that statement. And the answer is you do it
10 carefully, you look for sufficient verification in
11 monitoring to ensure the outcome of the agreement and
12 you make sure it's done right.

13 It's no different I suppose than any other
14 negotiation even with a benign power. United States
15 has to have -- it's going to have to be a thorough
16 agreement, it's going to have to have verification,
17 it's going to have monitoring. These are all the
18 components of a final fully verified denuclearization.
19 And it will be hard to get because it also is intrusive
20 and it's -- and in our intention it has to be
21 irreversible.

22 Now part of the approach that we're also

1 undertaking is to try to change the tenure. And so we
2 are engaging with the North Koreans directly through
3 diplomacy. The President has in Singapore committed to
4 transforming relations to establishing permanent peace
5 and the other steps that I've mentioned multiple times
6 today. It's not going to be done in isolation. But,
7 you know, we're negotiating with a country that poses a
8 very credible threat to its neighbors, to the region,
9 and to the world. And we don't get to pick other
10 countries' leaders. Chairman Kim is the leader of
11 North Korea. We will engage with him and his
12 representatives to see if we can address this threat.

13 MS. COOPER: Kay Huyen (phonetic). "You
14 mentioned that the U.S. despite not being open to
15 incremental denuclearization is open to pursuing
16 confidence-building measures. Could you give a few
17 examples of these confidence-building measures?"

18 MR. BIEGUN: The -- certainly we're very
19 interested in getting inspectors into North Korea. And
20 as part of that we're going to need some sort of
21 permanent liaison with the North Koreans in order to be
22 able to look out for the welfare and the rights of our

1 people who are there. You've heard the President in
2 fact at the summit in Hanoi, there was an exchange in
3 front of the cameras between President Trump and
4 Chairman Kim on this very issue. We're not there yet,
5 we're not able to establish a liaison office, but this
6 is just one that's been mentioned in public. There are
7 a lot of other initiatives that we have discussed in
8 private with the North Koreans that I would be loathed
9 to lay out in public because they are the subject of
10 private discussions and negotiations between us. But
11 we've discussed a lot of ideas and we will continue to
12 engage with them diplomatically to see if there is an
13 opportunity to engage and reach agreement on some of
14 these.

15 But the confidence building is important here.
16 We should never lose sight of the fact that we are
17 fighting against a tide of 70 years of war and
18 hostility on the Korean Peninsula. Yes, there are
19 dramatic systemic differences between us and the North
20 Koreans that make that additionally difficult. This is
21 the longest open war that the United States has
22 anywhere in the world. The fighting ended in 1953 and

1 the President has been quite clear that he's prepared
2 to change the trajectory on the Korean Peninsula for
3 the better.

4 MS. COOPER: You guys know this is an
5 international month of women, so I'm only going to read
6 questions from women.

7 (Applause)

8 MS. COOPER: Ms. Corey Hinderstein (phonetic),
9 has what I think is a really good one. "For the
10 working discussions and the lead-up to the Hanoi
11 Summit, the United States brought a robust delegation
12 of nuclear, sanctions, legal and military experts. But
13 I've not heard whether the DPRK brought an equally
14 equivalent expert technical delegation? Were the North
15 Koreans prepared for negotiations with an appropriately
16 technical team across the table? Or were they only
17 interested in an exchange of views?" Was this the case
18 of you guys just sitting there and reading talking
19 points to each other, particularly from the North Korea
20 point of view?

21 MR. BIEGUN: Yeah, I'm not going to -- I'm not
22 going to go into detail about what happens behind

1 closed doors between us and the North Koreans. I think
2 both sides owe each other a certain amount of
3 sensitivity and respect in that regard. I will say
4 that the North Korean delegation that has sat across
5 from the table was highly qualified, and we presume
6 speaks with the authority of the government of North
7 Korea. We don't get to pick who we negotiate with.
8 The North Koreans get to pick who they put across the
9 table from us. But we had very good discussions. We
10 would not have gone on for practically 2 full weeks
11 with a gap in between if both sides weren't adequately
12 represented.

13 However, for sure, as we move forward in this,
14 if we begin to get interaction, we are -- both sides
15 are going to need to increasingly drop on technical
16 experts. The issues at work here are highly
17 complicated. The issues of the nuclear fuel cycle will
18 require some of the most talented and experienced
19 individuals in the United States government to be
20 participants in this. And likewise the same for the
21 North Koreans.

22 MS. COOPER: From Ms. Shigao (phonetic).

1 "Could we expect a third summit between President Trump
2 and Chairman Kim shortly?"

3 MR. BIEGUN: Between?

4 MS. COOPER: Trump and Kim Jong-un?

5 MR. BIEGUN: Exactly --

6 MS. COOPER: A third summit.

7 MR. BIEGUN: A third summit. So I know the
8 President has spoken about his willingness to continue
9 to meet with Chairman Kim possibly in a third summit.
10 We don't have anything to announce today, Helene. But
11 in our view and the President's view, this top-level
12 engagement does help create the space. And from my
13 point of view as a negotiator, that kind of engagement
14 does create space for us at the working level to test
15 out ideas and see if we can close the gaps. So that
16 will ultimately be up to the President. It will be
17 driven by the course of events. But the President
18 hasn't ruled that out.

19 MS. COOPER: Ms. Laura Rockwood (phonetic).
20 "Is the U.S. pressing North Korea to accept IAEA
21 inspectors?"

22 MR. BIEGUN: We would very much see part of

1 the complete process of denuclearization in North Korea
2 to include North Korea's return to the nonproliferation
3 treaty and the additional protocols. And towards that
4 end, IAEA has a very important monitoring role in order
5 to ensure that certain practices continue to be
6 observed to international standards. The -- we are not
7 at the point where -- with the North Koreans where
8 we're negotiating the specific composition of
9 inspectors for some of these issues. And it's also
10 there's an additional level of complication that comes
11 from the fact that as is well known, North Korea now is
12 -- has acquired, has mastered the technology necessary
13 to produce nuclear weapon.

14 IAEA inspectors are generally precluded from
15 engaging in nuclear weapons programs under the
16 nonproliferation treaty. So it's a complicated issue.
17 But ultimately, we would be reassured very much by the
18 involvement of the IAEA in this process as they bring
19 tremendous expertise to bear on these kind of nuclear
20 issues around the world.

21 MS. COOPER: Ms. Cayley Thomas (phonetic) has
22 -- I know I'm pronouncing that name and I apologize.

1 But she's getting again to this whole idea of step-by-
2 step. "If lifting sanctions is untenable until full
3 denuclearization is achieved, what incentives is the
4 U.S. willing to offer the DPRK in order to achieve any
5 progress moving towards that goal and the full vision
6 of a U.S. DPRK relations that you described?

7 MR. BIEGUN: So again, I wasn't in government
8 in June of last year when the Singapore Summit
9 occurred. But I remember hearing much reporting and I
10 think it was some official statements that suggested
11 that the United States was prepared to move very
12 quickly and within a year to complete the process of
13 denuclearization.

14 As I look back on that, I think about how had
15 this process really begun in earnest in July of last
16 year, we would potentially be 3 or 4 months away from
17 the moment at which we might be able under -- whatever
18 analysis was brought to bear at that point, we might be
19 in a position to actually lift sanctions. This has
20 occurred to me many times because the lifting of
21 sanctions of course is an issue that comes up in our
22 discussions with the North Koreans, and with good

1 reason. We think the sanctions are having a huge
2 impact on the North Korean economy.

3 You know, the President bypassed this process
4 question at the Hanoi Summit and he did it very
5 convincingly by challenging Chairman Kim to go back, to
6 move fast. Let's go for a big proposal here to
7 eliminate these weapons of mass destruction programs.
8 United States is prepared to act on all of the
9 commitments in the Singapore Joint Statement, which
10 truly would transform events on the Korean Peninsula.

11 The President has gone even further to begin
12 laying out a vision for what he believes is a very
13 bright economic future for North Korea as well with its
14 rich natural resources, its relatively undeveloped
15 economy, and its critical location at a crossroads of
16 China, Russia, and South Korea. The economic potential
17 the President describes is enormous. And this is the
18 vision that we're trying to inculcate our North Korean
19 counterparts with, that the faster they move, the
20 faster we get to this brighter future.

21 United States -- I cannot be more emphatic.
22 The United States has chosen to take this course. The

1 President has created the space and the momentum for
2 diplomacy. The missing variable is North Korea itself
3 has to also fully commit to the elimination of its
4 weapons of mass destruction and affiliated programs.
5 And if they do that, we will get to this end point
6 quickly.

7 MS. COOPER: I spent a lot of time at the
8 Pentagon trying to get them to not talk in acronyms.
9 And Ms. Alexandra Bell (phonetic) sounds like she
10 belongs to, in that building.

11 (Laughter)

12 MS. COOPER: Listen to this. "Are we
13 demanding that DPRK sign and ratify the BWC, CWC, and
14 CTBT? I assume we're talking about the Biological
15 Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention. I
16 never could figure out, CTBT that's --

17 MR. BIEGUN: Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty.

18 MS. COOPER: Thank you. Further, given that
19 BWC lacks the verification program, what tools and
20 techniques are we planning to use to ensure their
21 biological weapons program is eliminated?

22 MR. BIEGUN: Yeah. Great question. Acronyms

1 and all. All three of these are part of the UN
2 Security Council resolutions, so it's not the United
3 States that would be asking. This is actually the
4 unanimous vote of the United Nations Security Council
5 called upon North Korea to abide by these. North Korea
6 is a signatory, but not in compliance with the
7 Biological Weapons Convention. North Korea is not one
8 of the 190 some countries that are members of the
9 Chemical Weapons Convention. And North Korea is not a
10 member of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty nor is the
11 United States, as that was not ratified here as well.

12 We are pressing North Korea certainly for the
13 elimination of nuclear, chemical and biological
14 consistent with the longstanding wishes of the United
15 Nations Security Council. And so that's very
16 important. The mechanism for doing those in my view
17 seems very usefully available in the Biological Weapons
18 and the Chemical Weapons Convention, particularly in
19 the case of nuclear weapons we're going to be pursuing
20 a much larger vision than simply Comprehensive Test-
21 Ban. But it's not in conflict certainly with the
22 objectives, but our diplomacy is about much, much more

1 than the absence of nuclear testing.

2 In the case of Chemical Weapons Convention, as
3 the questioner points out, there is an organization
4 called the OPCW, the -- which is the implementing body
5 for the Chemical Weapons Convention based in Hague.
6 And they could be a very important partner in working
7 through and resolving the issues of chemical weapons in
8 North Korea. And it's an idea that we should consider.

9 On Biological Weapons Convention, the point
10 was also made, there isn't a similar implementing
11 agency associated to the Biological Weapons Convention,
12 so it's going to be a little bit more complicated in
13 that case to ensure that North Korea is in full
14 compliance with the BWC. That's our goal in both cases
15 -- in both the cases of Chemical Weapons and Biological
16 Weapons. But we may need to develop some other
17 mechanisms in order to arrive at the necessary
18 assurances in the case of the Biological Weapons
19 Convention.

20 We've got a lot of work to do. Not all these
21 issues are yet on the table with us. As I said to
22 Helene earlier, we have raised all of them with North

1 Korea. But the modalities and methodologies through
2 which we're going to be able to achieve our aims, we're
3 still working through. And of course ultimately we
4 need the agreement of the North Koreans to do that if
5 we're going to be successful.

6 MS. COOPER: We have 2 more minutes left.
7 Last questions, please -- well, I'm going to take it
8 then. What are they like to negotiate with?

9 MR. BIEGUN: They being the North Koreans?
10 You know, all of us who work on this issue are acutely
11 aware of the magnitude of what we're undertaking. We
12 don't undertake it lightly. It is hugely reassuring to
13 have the full support of the President and the
14 Secretary of State for diplomacy, the entire
15 administration is engaged on this issue. And as we go
16 into the room with the North Koreans, it gives us a lot
17 of confidence in speaking with them as to what -- what
18 is America's objective in this negotiation.

19 I have to assume that in the room the person
20 sitting across the table for me has the same mandate
21 and has the same sense of mission from their
22 government. It can be challenging for sure in a system

1 like that you don't have a robust internal debate, you
2 don't have thoughtful commentary from think tanks, you
3 don't have critical or thoughtful reporting from media,
4 you don't have -- even have the makings of what we
5 would have inside the U.S. government of an interagency
6 process that, you know, constantly is dealing with the
7 tension of keeping alignment on policies as complicated
8 to this one. It's a very different system. It's
9 driven by the top-down. And that's why I am such an
10 enthusiastic supporter of the way the President has
11 approached this.

12 We have tried for 25 years to percolate
13 positions up from the working level to the leadership
14 level with no success. President Trump in engaging
15 Chairman Kim has engaged the real decision-maker in the
16 North Korean system. And the one who can truly create
17 the space for my counterparts sitting across the table
18 for me to be flexible, to be agile, to be creative to
19 find solutions to these issues, there's a lot of stress
20 on the people on the other side of the table.

21 You can feel that palpably when you talk with
22 them. And these issues are difficult as they should be

1 because these are very important issues for both
2 countries. And as I said before, we're swimming
3 against the tide of 70 years of history. But, you
4 know, there's lot of things that come into play.
5 Personal relationships, building of trust, the ability
6 to communicate. It's going to take us a while to get
7 there. But I'm confident we can. The North Koreans
8 like the President have made the decision to engage in
9 this diplomatically.

10 I have to operate under the assumption that
11 those people are the right people, that they are
12 capable, which I think they are, and that they have the
13 trust and direction of their leadership in these
14 negotiations. So, you know, it's complicated with
15 North Korea, that's a huge understatement. It's not
16 like negotiating like I did in the private sector. And
17 the consequences for failure for both sides are
18 enormous as well. And so that weighs on it.

19 But we've had a very successful set of
20 engagements. We've been in discussions. You know, we
21 haven't produced an agreement. We didn't produce a
22 joint statement out of the summit. There's not yet a

1 point where we've closed the gaps necessary. But the
2 discussions have been constructive and we've been
3 engaged. This is what diplomacy is. This is what the
4 President has committed and recommitted to coming out
5 of the Hanoi Summit. And so they're people, that's
6 what they are. And we just have to find a way to get
7 to the right answer that represents the national
8 security interest of our country and they have the same
9 mandate for their government.

10 MS. COOPER: Thank you so much, Steve. We're
11 apparently going to be beaten if we don't stop right at
12 noon, so we're stopping. At the end of -- I will read
13 this. "At the end of your session, please state the
14 following. Please join us for lunch across the atrium
15 in the ballroom." Steve, thank you so much.

16 MR. BIEGUN: Thank you, Helene.

17 (Applause)

18

19

20

21

22