



NCAFP Meeting with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho

March 10, 2012

By Donald S. Zagoria

The NCAFP held an off-the-record, Track II meeting with a DPRK delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, in New York on March 10, 2012. A list of participants is included in the appendix.

This report is not a consensus document and it reflects the views of the author only.

Introduction

The NCAFP met with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho for a six hour meeting on March 10, 2012. The participant list is included in the appendix.

The meeting took place shortly after the Feb. 29 "leap day" agreement between the DPRK and the United States that called for a moratorium on North Korean missile and nuclear tests and for the readmission of IAEA inspectors to Pyongyang.

The meeting also took place prior to the surprise North Korean announcement that the DPRK intended to go ahead with a "satellite" launch in mid April 2012.

Meeting Summary

In the meeting, Vice Foreign Minister Ri offered his assessment of the Feb. 29 agreement as follows:

1. It means that the DPRK is still committed to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. This remains "our goal."
2. It implies that the DPRK is committed to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and to "avoid clashes."
3. The U.S. has reaffirmed it has no hostile intent.
4. The DPRK is committed to a moratorium on nuclear and missile activities "so long as productive talks continue." The DPRK is willing to negotiate to stop modernization, additional production, and transfer of nuclear weapons. So there is opportunity for further progress.
5. In light of the past history with no progress, we need to think of "another approach." The past formula was that if North Korea moves, the U.S. will follow. The new approach should be for the bigger power, the U.S., to take "small steps" and to make North Korea "feel safer." If the U.S. were to do that, things "can change a lot" and the DPRK "can make very bold decisions on nuclear issues."
6. The U.S. needs to change its policy in three areas:
 - a. Enter into diplomatic relations with the DPRK
 - b. Stop avoiding a peace treaty
 - c. Ease the sanctions regime
7. The DPRK is willing to reach agreement on "irreversible steps" regarding activities that are of concern to the U.S., such as additional production, modernization and transfer of nuclear weapons.
8. The new DPRK leadership "will try to make peace with the U.S." and will "not make trouble for the U.S. as long as the U.S. does not harass North Korea." Unlike former DPRK leaders of an older generation who fought the U.S., the new generation of leaders has no intention to fight the U.S. And once we have peace "we could be helpful to the U.S."

9. The DPRK leadership decision to improve relations with the U.S. dates back to July of last year when the Obama Administration said it was ready to make an effort to improve relations and we responded that we were equally willing to make such an effort.

On the American side, (we had several former U.S. officials, including Tom Hubbard, Victor Cha, Evans Revere as well as Frank Jannuzi and Keith Luse from the Foreign Relations Committee) we pounded them on:

1. The need to improve relations with the ROK.
2. The importance of sending signals that they were serious about denuclearization and improving relations.
3. The need to create a new psychological atmosphere by lowering the rhetoric.
4. The need to get the IAEA into North Korea soon, and to give them as much access as they need.

Several Americans suggested that we try to jumpstart the process by engaging at a more senior level. We all recognized that this is not possible until after the U.S. elections.

Several Americans also suggested bringing the two militaries into the Track II process.

We also suggested to the North Koreans that they look at the Vietnamese and Burmese models as opposed to the Libya model.

Appendix

THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY (NCAFP)
PRESENTS
A MEETING WITH A DELEGATION
FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF KOREA
LED BY VICE FOREIGN MINISTER, MR. RI YONG HO

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2012

PARTICIPANTS

DPRK PARTICIPANTS:

Mr. RI Yong Ho

Vice Foreign Minister

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Consultant

Disarmament and Peace Institute, Ministry of
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Ambassador HAN Song Ryol

Deputy Permanent Representative

Permanent Mission of the DPRK to the UN

Ms. CHOE Son Hui

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Mr. CHOE II

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Permanent Mission of the DPRK to the UN

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