



U.S.-Korea Relations:

Good News Summit Kicks Disputes Down the Road

Donald G. Gross
Atlantic Council of the United States

Speculation about a possible North Korean nuclear test spiked tensions on the Korean Peninsula this quarter as Pyongyang continued to refuse to return to the Six-Party Talks. Pyongyang underscored its status as a nuclear weapons state by removing spent fuel rods from its five-megawatt reactor, and then testing a short-range missile in the direction of Japan.

If North Korea's purpose was to heighten differences between South Korea and the U.S., and thus weaken the alliance, its efforts proved successful through May. The U.S., as a veiled threat, moved 15 stealth fighters to South Korea, broke off talks on recovering Korean War remains, and considered seeking sanctions against North Korea at the UN.

After Seoul openly rejected seeking UN sanctions, South and North Korean diplomats met for the first time in 10 months on May 15 to discuss "inter-Korean issues." Seoul promised North Korea large-scale aid if it returned to the Six-Party Talks, but gained no commitment from Pyongyang on the nuclear issue.

With Washington and Seoul far apart on how best to deal with North Korea, President George W. Bush and President Roh Moo-hyun held a one-day summit June 10. Rather than resolving their tactical differences, the two leaders emphasized strategic agreement on the importance of the U.S.-Korea alliance and a peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue.

A few days after the summit, South Korea's Unification Minister Chung Dong-young met with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il who declared his country would rejoin the six-party process in July if the U.S. "recognizes and respects" his regime. Although U.S. officials remained skeptical since North Korea did not provide a firm date for attending the negotiations, it appeared Pyongyang might make a concrete commitment before or during a visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao in July.

The U.S. and South Korea settled a dispute this quarter over OPLAN 5029, a contingency plan laying out responses to cataclysmic events in North Korea, including regime collapse or a refugee crisis. South Korea had objected to putting its forces under U.S.

command pursuant to this plan. The two governments agreed to further develop the *concept* of the contingency plan without deciding its *operational* components.

Incoming U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman said this quarter the U.S. would not negotiate a free trade agreement with South Korea until “additional progress” is made on outstanding trade disputes. His position put pressure on Seoul to allow greater access for Hollywood films to the South Korean market and to end its import ban on U.S. beef.

North Korea emphasizes its nuclear credentials

At the outset of the quarter, North Korea continued to tout its status as a nuclear weapons state. In a Foreign Ministry statement, Pyongyang said “now that the DPRK has become a full-fledged nuclear-armed state, the Six-Party Talks should serve as disarmament talks where the participating countries negotiate the issue on an equal footing.” North Korea’s UN Ambassador Han Song-ryol, reinforced the ministry statement by further demanding the U.S. apologize for Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice’s remark calling North Korea an “outpost of tyranny,” before the country would return to the Six-Party Talks. Not surprisingly, the U.S. rejected both demands.

Meetings that U.S. North Korea expert Selig Harrison held with senior officials during his April 5-9 visit to Pyongyang provided insight into North Korean motivations. After discussions with North Korea’s number-two leader, Kim Yong-nam, chairman of the Supreme People’s Assembly, and Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju, Harrison concluded that Pyongyang, *at this stage*, is only willing to freeze its nuclear program at current levels and “will not negotiate the complete dismantlement of nuclear weapons.”

Harrison observed that “they are not willing to discuss dismantling *unless and until the U.S. agrees to normalize relations with them*. Their logic...is that at this point the U.S. and North Korea are in a state of war. There’s no peace treaty ending the Korean War.”

In other words, Pyongyang intends to resist U.S. pressure to give up its nuclear arsenal so long as the fundamental confrontation on the Korean Peninsula continues. If the U.S. takes steps to normalize relations and give up what Pyongyang sees as its policy seeking “regime change,” North Korea, in that context, could agree to end its nuclear program.

Practically speaking, the North Korean view reflects its dismay over the sequencing of reciprocal measures proposed by the U.S. in the last round of Six-Party Talks in June 2004. North Korea wants the U.S. to provide security assurances, economic assistance, and significant steps toward normalizing diplomatic relations either before or as Pyongyang fully dismantles its nuclear weapons program. The U.S., on the other hand, has been unwilling to provide this *quid pro quo* until North Korea’s dismantlement is completed or well underway. South Korea has tried to bridge the gap with a three-stage approach of choreographed reciprocal steps, but Seoul’s proposal has not yet gained traction in Washington or Pyongyang.

In a further exercise of brinkmanship, North Korea sharpened its position in mid-April by shutting down its five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyun so it could remove spent fuel rods. Once reprocessed, the plutonium in the fuel rods would be sufficient to build approximately six to eight more nuclear bombs. This action triggered a tough U.S. response, with the White House spokesman saying on April 18 the U.S. intended to seek sanctions against North Korea at the UN Security Council, if Pyongyang did not return to the Six-Party Talks. (Pyongyang has repeatedly stated it would treat UN sanctions as an “act of war”).

The U.S. position, in turn, highlighted a major difference with South Korea on appropriate tactics to bring North Korea back to the bargaining table. Two days after the White House statement, South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon said that Seoul opposes seeking UN sanctions against North Korea or taking other punitive measures.

U.S. sticks and South Korean carrots

From this point, until the summit meeting between President Roh and President Bush on June 10, tensions between the allies increased sharply over how to deal with North Korea’s nuclear threat and its unwillingness to rejoin the Six-Party Talks. In response to Pyongyang’s aggressive declarations, the U.S. ratcheted up various pressures. For its part, South Korea insisted on avoiding all mention of punitive measures against Pyongyang in the belief that they would only harden North Korea’s resolve. The difference in approaches – and attitudes – raised questions about the medium- and long-term resiliency of the alliance both in Seoul and Washington.

On April 23, *The Wall Street Journal* reported the U.S. had evidence that North Korea was planning a nuclear test. Though South Korea’s National Security Advisor Kwon Jin-ho downplayed U.S. concerns, the alleged test preparation drew international media attention. Anger about a possible nuclear test and North Korea’s earlier move to reprocess spent fuel seemed to motivate President Bush’s rhetorical attacks on Kim Jong-il at a televised press conference a week later.

Bush termed the North Korean leader “a dangerous person” and a “tyrant,” leading to speculation in Seoul the U.S. had decided on unilaterally compelling North Korea to dismantle its nuclear program. Pyongyang did not waste time in firing back, saying “Bush is a hooligan bereft of any personality as a human being...He is a half-baked man in terms of morality and a philistine whom we can never deal with.”

After this rhetorical exchange, North Korea continued its hardline tactics by firing a short-range missile on May 1 into the East Sea in the direction of Japan, perhaps in lieu of the nuclear weapons test it did not to carry out this quarter. Both Washington and Seoul were quick to downplay the test’s significance. White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card said it was “not surprising,” while Deputy Foreign Minister Song Min-soon called the missile “far from the one that can carry a nuclear weapon. This isn’t a case to be linked to the nuclear dispute.”

The missile test nevertheless achieved its presumably intended effect of heightening South Korean public speculation about the likelihood of war and thus increasing alliance tensions. U.S. Forces Korea Commander Gen. Leon LaPorte reassured South Korea that any military action against North Korea would require allied consensus.

Throughout May, the U.S. and South Korea took diverging approaches toward North Korea's brinkmanship tactics. The U.S. continued to warn of a possible North Korean nuclear test, which seemed increasingly imminent after Pyongyang announced it had finished removing 8,000 fuel rods for reprocessing from its five-megawatt reactor. The U.S. reminded Pyongyang it has a "robust deterrent capacity" to deal militarily with the DPRK should that become necessary.

On May 9, U.S. negotiator for the Six-Party Talks Joseph DeTrani traveled to New York and met with North Korean officials at Pyongyang's mission to the UN. The Bush administration did not publicly discuss the purpose of the meeting in which DeTrani reportedly explained that North Korea's desire for the U.S. to show "no hostile intent" before Pyongyang rejoined the talks had clearly been met by a series of U.S. statements.

U.S. psychological pressure on North Korea reached a peak at the end of May when the Pentagon confirmed it had deployed 15 stealth fighters to U.S. air bases in South Korea, allegedly as part of routine rotation. At the same time, the Defense Department announced it was suspending the one cooperative activity the U.S. has carried out with North Korea during the last several years – a joint effort to recover the bodies of U.S. servicemen still missing from the Korean War. An unidentified "senior official" traveling with Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld also threatened to bring the North Korean nuclear issue to the UN Security Council in the immediate future.

On June 30, U.S. negotiator DeTrani met for the second time with North Korean officials in New York. The meeting took place in the context of an academic conference and likely centered on a U.S. request that North Korea provide specific dates when it would send a delegation to a new round of Six-Party Talks.

South Korea took a far more conciliatory tack during May. Seoul initially downplayed North Korea's announcement on fuel rods to dampen any sense of crisis. Vice Unification Minister Rhee Bong-jo said "we regard the removal of the spent fuel rods as a step in line with North Korea's previous moves to strengthen its negotiation power by aggravating the situation. But it does not build up a crisis right away."

South Korea focused instead on the meeting of South and North Korean negotiators concerning "inter-Korean" issues scheduled for May 15. Likely for the sake of reducing peninsular tensions while increasing U.S.-South Korean differences, Pyongyang agreed to a new round of these ministerial-level talks for the first time in 10 months.

Meeting at Kaesong, site of a joint pilot industrial complex just north of the demilitarized zone, diplomats mainly took up North-South issues, including reunions of families separated during the Korean War, opening of cross-border rail links, and fertilizer aid to North Korea. However, Vice Minister Rhee also urged North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks, and said Seoul would offer an “important proposal” – said to be the equivalent of a Marshall Plan for North Korea – at the new round. The North Korean delegates gave no commitment on rejoining the talks.

Bush administration officials were reportedly frustrated with the outcome of the mid-May inter-Korean meeting: 200,000 tons of fertilizer shipped to North Korea, Pyongyang’s successful objection to any mention of the nuclear issue in the meeting’s communiqué, and no North Korean agreement on the date of a new round of Six-Party Talks. The unilateral U.S. decision to send stealth fighters to South Korea (with the capability of carrying out a military strike against North Korea’s nuclear reactors) and suspending joint recovery efforts expressed the administration’s frustration.

U.S.-South Korea summit stresses strategic agreement

A noticeable shift in the Bush administration’s approach toward Pyongyang began on May 31, shortly after it began planning for the June 10 U.S.-South Korea summit that Seoul requested to realign the two government’s positions on North Korea. Apparently to lay the groundwork for a successful summit, President Bush called for a peaceful diplomatic solution to the nuclear crisis and referred respectfully to the North Korean leader as “Mr. Kim Jong-il.” South Korea had urged just such an approach to overcome President Bush’s earlier slights of the North Korean leader.

Five days before the summit, Secretary Rice pulled back on the earlier threat by an unidentified senior defense department official when she said the U.S. has no immediate plans to bring the nuclear issue to the UN Security Council. She observed, “The idea that within weeks we are going to decide one way or another is a little forward-leaning.”

The positive outcome of President Roh’s summit meeting with President Bush in Washington exceeded expectations. Most observers predicted tough bargaining over the U.S. preference for punitive measures and South Korea’s emphasis on incentives to bring Pyongyang back to the Six-Party Talks. Instead, both sides reaffirmed the U.S.-South Korea alliance and their mutual desire for a diplomatic solution to the nuclear issue. The joint expression of these fundamental principles overshadowed major tactical differences for moving diplomacy with North Korea forward. While Presidents Roh and Bush did not make any new proposals to Pyongyang, Bush pledged “more normal relations” with North Korea if it moves to resolve the nuclear issue.

Soon after the summit meeting, President Bush met with noted North Korean defector Kang Chol-hwan in the White House to underscore the president’s concern about terrible human rights conditions in North Korea. Kang, author of “The Aquariums of Pyongyang” which describes his years in a North Korean concentration camp, has been marginalized

in South Korea by concerns that too much attention to human rights might disrupt relations with Pyongyang.

After a mid-June meeting between U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill and Deputy Minister Song, South Korean officials attempted to clarify the relation of the human rights issue to the Six-Party Talks. One unidentified official stated definitively that human rights “is not an agenda item for the Six-Party Talks.” He remarked that Seoul nonetheless has “grave concern” for the human rights situation in North Korea and is considering ways to “effectively improve” it. Hill said the U.S. would not remain silent on human rights abuses and suggested that a more “normal” relationship with North Korea would depend in part on how it addresses this issue.

Negotiations with North Korea on the nuclear issue culminated this quarter when South Korea’s Unification Minister Chung met Kim Jong-il at the end of a celebration marking the historic North-South summit in June 2000. Chung delivered a message from President Roh urging North Korea to make a “strategic decision” to abandon its nuclear program in exchange for security guarantees, economic aid, and improved relations with the U.S.

After five hours of talks at a guest house in Pyongyang, Kim Jong-il reportedly told Chung that North Korea would rejoin the Six-Party Talks in July if the U.S. “recognizes and respects” his regime. Kim expressed a willingness to give up North Korea’s nuclear arsenal, once again become a member of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and allow international inspectors to verify North Korea’s compliance. After Chung returned to Seoul, he also reported Kim Jong-il’s offer to “abolish all medium- and long-range missiles” if the U.S. formally establishes diplomatic relations with North Korea.

Commenting on the Chung-Kim meeting, Assistant Secretary Hill said while it was “very positive and important,” the U.S. expects North Korea to “give a date” for participating in the Six-Party Talks and commit itself to serious negotiation: “We don’t want to come to the talks just to talk, but to make progress.”

At the end of the quarter, Unification Minister Chung flew to Washington to brief senior U.S. officials on the content of his meetings with Kim Jong-il. Chung also discussed in detail the elements of the “important proposal” Seoul is prepared to offer Pyongyang once North Korea returns to the Six-Party Talks. Observers await the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to North Korea in July, when North Korea is expected to propose specific dates for rejoining the nuclear negotiations.

U.S. officials strive to prevent further anti-American protests

At the outset of his summit meeting with President Roh, President Bush offered the “deepest sympathies” of the United States for the tragic death of a 51-year-old Korean woman who was killed the day before by a U.S. military truck. This accident coincided with the third anniversary of the death of two schoolgirls, run over by a U.S. armored vehicle, which sparked anti-American protests throughout South Korea.

Beyond the president's apology, Gen. LaPorte, commander of the Combined Forces Command, visited the victim's family as did Maj. Gen. George Higgins, commander of the U.S. 2nd Infantry Division. These official actions effectively demonstrated sincere U.S. concern to demonstrators holding candlelight vigils and to the public at large.

Allies settle their dispute on a contingency plan

In mid-April, Seoul newspapers reported that South Korea's National Security Council halted consultations in January 2005 between the ROK Defense Ministry and U.S. Forces Korea over the so-called "OPLAN 5029," a contingency plan for responding to internal conflicts in North Korea, including regime collapse or a massive refugee crisis. The NSC objected specifically that the OPLAN draft allowed the U.S. to take command of the U.S.-South Korean Combined Forces Command in an emergency that occurred during "peacetime." Under previous understandings, the U.S. exercises control over South Korea's military only during "wartime." The NSC argued that if put into effect, the OPLAN 5029 draft could infringe on the country's national sovereignty and capability for keeping peace on the Korean Peninsula.

This disagreement over contingency planning occurred against a broader backdrop of South Korean suspicion about U.S. intentions to take unilateral military action against North Korea. In early May, U.S. Forces Korea Commander Gen. LaPorte told South Korean lawmakers that the U.S. has "no intention" of taking unilateral action and is committed to achieving "consensus" with South Korea on necessary military steps.

The controversy over OPLAN 5029 appeared to be resolved at a one-on-one meeting between U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and South Korean Defense Secretary Yoon Kwang-ung on the sidelines of the fourth IISS Asia Security Conference in Singapore in early June. The officials reportedly agreed on cooperating to "improve and develop" the *concept* of a contingency plan for dealing with potential internal conflict in North Korea, without specifying the *operational* components of such a plan.

U.S.-South Korea trade issues

U.S. Trade Representative Rob Portman made it clear in early June that working-level meetings in February and March 2005 to discuss a U.S.-Korea FTA were purely preliminary and that the U.S. has not yet decided whether to initiate formal FTA negotiations. Speaking at the closing of an Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) trade ministers meeting in Seoul, Portman said that "additional progress" on outstanding trade issues between the two countries had to occur before substantive FTA discussions got underway.

Among the most controversial bilateral trade issues now on the table are South Korea's film quota protecting domestic filmmakers against Hollywood blockbusters and South Korea's current import ban against U.S. beef. U.S. efforts to hold a FTA negotiation hostage to progress in lowering the screen quota reflect the influence of the U.S. Motion Picture Association in Washington.

South Korea was prepared to lift the import ban on U.S. beef imposed after a case of “mad-cow” disease occurred in the U.S. in late 2003. But plans to do so during June bilateral trade meetings went awry after a new case of the disease was publicized in the U.S. South Korean consumer, civic, and agriculture groups joined forces in pressing the government to keep the import ban in place.

In late June, the World Trade Organization (WTO) reversed on appeal a ruling that barred the U.S. from imposing tariffs on Hynix Semiconductor. The U.S. previously put those tariffs in place after alleging that the South Korean government’s assistance to Hynix amounted to illegal subsidies. Although Hynix will now once again face 44.71 percent tariffs on its semiconductor chip exports to the U.S., the company downplayed the impact of the decision. Hynix argued the WTO ruling would not have a significantly adverse effect because much of the company’s semiconductor production for the U.S. market occurs at a plant in Eugene, Oregon where the chips are not subject to a U.S. tariff.

Prospects

Until the U.S.-South Korea summit in early June, the two allies appeared to be on a collision course over negotiating tactics with North Korea. In the months leading up to the summit, President Roh argued that peaceful diplomacy is the only acceptable means of ending North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons. But his government often undercut diplomatic efforts to bring North Korea back to the bargaining table by rejecting pressures against Kim Jong-il’s regime.

Seoul appeared unwilling to accept a short-term setback in relations with Pyongyang even if that was necessary to get the Six-Party Talks back on track. South Korea’s intransigence deeply frustrated Bush administration officials who have been preparing to seek sanctions against North Korea at the United Nations.

For its part, the Bush administration frequently reiterated its desire to see the Six-Party Talks succeed, but its actions belied its words. Instead of taking determined steps to advance the negotiations, the United States appeared all too willing to let them fail and then blame North Korea. The U.S. has refused to offer sufficiently large and tangible incentives to Pyongyang to dismantle its nuclear program. Senior U.S. officials fear domestic political criticism that they are “appeasing” North Korea, as they previously accused the Clinton administration of doing. They seem to lack the political will to offer necessary incentives, even if their reluctance means continuing impasse and failure to achieve a diplomatic settlement.

Going into the summit meeting in early June, both governments were aware that to reduce alliance tensions, they had to align their policies on North Korea and overcome their differences. Instead of trying to achieve consensus on a combination of tactical pressures and incentives, however, Presidents Roh and Bush emphasized their strategic agreement on the importance of the U.S.-South Korea alliance and the need for peaceful resolution of the nuclear dispute. This approach worked brilliantly for the short-term –

and bought time for Seoul's diplomatic outreach in mid-June to Kim Jong-il – but it also papered over the real differences between the two countries.

If North Korea rejoins the Six-Party Talks in late July, as now appears likely following the visit of China's President Hu, the summit strategy of reaffirming areas of agreement while avoiding areas of dispute will prove wise and far-sighted. If, however, Pyongyang continues to resist negotiations, the U.S. and South Korea will once again have to confront, more openly than ever before, the differences over dealing with North Korea that have traumatized relations between the allies.

Chronology of U.S.-Korea Relations April-June 2005

April 1, 2005: North Korea says Six-Party Talks should be transformed into regional disarmament talks now that it is a nuclear weapons state; North Korean UN ambassador says U.S. apology is necessary for North Korea to return to Six-Party Talks.

April 2, 2005: North Korea calls for the exclusion of Japan from the Six-Party Talks.

April 5, 2005: U.S. and South Korean military officials begin two days of Security Policy Initiative talks on the state of the alliance in Hawaii.

April 17, 2005: North Korea is reported to have shut down its five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyun to remove spent fuel rods for the purpose of reprocessing.

April 18, 2005: White House spokesman says the U.S. will refer the nuclear issue with North Korea to the UN Security Council if Pyongyang refuses to return to the Six-Party Talks; Seoul confirms that North Korea has shut down its five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyun, but says it may have been for "technical" reasons.

April 20, 2005: Foreign Minister Ban says Seoul opposes seeking U.N. sanctions against North Korea or taking other punitive measures.

April 23, 2005: *The Wall Street Journal* reports U.S. has evidence that North Korea is planning a nuclear test.

April 26, 2005: South Korea announces agreement with U.S. on military burden-sharing with an 8.9 percent reduction in South Korea's annual contribution.

April 28, 2005: In a news conference, President Bush calls North Korean leader Kim Jong-il a "tyrant" and a "dangerous person."

April 29, 2005: Ambassador Christopher Hill meets South Korean officials in Seoul.

April 30, 2005: North Korea retorts President Bush is a “hooligan bereft of any personality as a human being.”

May 1, 2005: North Korea test launches short-range missile into the East Sea.

May 2, 2005: U.S. Forces Korea Commander Gen. Leon LaPorte says any military action against North requires U.S. and South Korean consensus; U.S. downplays North Korean missile test, saying it is “not surprising.”

May 5, 2005: Foreign ministers of Japan, South Korea, and China, meet in Tokyo to urge North Korea to make a “strategic decision” and return to the six-party process.

May 7, 2005: *ABC News* reports the U.S. has prepared contingency measures to prevent a North Korean nuclear test; at a meeting in Moscow, President Roh and Chinese President Hu Jintao urge North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks.

May 9, 2005: U.S. negotiator for the Six-Party Talks Joseph DeTrani travels to New York to meet with North Korean officials at Pyongyang’s mission to the UN to show U.S. has “no hostile intent.”

May 11, 2005: North Korea claims it has finished removing 8,000 spent fuel rods from the five-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon.

May 12, 2005: State Department spokesman condemns North Korea’s “provocative statement and actions” for allegedly removing 8,000 spent fuel rods. Former South Korean President Kim Dae-jung says the Six-Party Talks are entering an “ominous stage” and urges direct U.S.-North Korea talks.

May 13, 2005: Japan calls for reconvening the Six-Party Talks, even in the absence of North Korea; U.S. and North Korean diplomats meet in New York.

May 16-17, 2005: South Korea and North Korea resume inter-Korean talks in Kaesong after a 10-month hiatus.

May 26, 2005: North Korea denies planning to conduct a nuclear test.

May 27, 2005: Pentagon confirms deployment of 15 stealth fighters to South Korea and suspension of joint U.S.-North Korea program to recover remains of U.S. soldiers from the Korean War.

May 31, 2005: At a press conference, President Bush calls for peaceful solution to North Korea nuclear issue and refers to North Korean leader as “Mr. Kim Jong-il.”

June 5, 2005: Secretary Rice says the U.S. is unlikely to bring the North Korea nuclear issue before the UN Security Council soon.

June 8, 2005: North Korean Ambassador Kim Gye-kwan tells *ABC News* that his country has enough nuclear weapons to defend against a U.S. attack.

June 9, 2005: Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless meets with Korean defense officials to discuss “strategic flexibility.”

June 10, 2005: Presidents Bush and Roh meet in Washington and jointly call for North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks; President Bush apologizes for accidental death a day earlier of a Korean woman killed by a USFK truck.

June 17, 2005: Kim Jong-il says North Korea will join the Six-Party Talks as early as July if the U.S. “recognizes and respects” North Korea’s sovereignty.

June 20, 2005: South Korean media report that Kim Jong-il told Unification Minister Chung that North Korea might abolish all medium- and long-range missiles if the U.S. establishes normal relations.

June 27, 2005: World Trade Organization overturns on appeal its previous ruling and leaves in place U.S. punitive tariffs against Hynix Semiconductor; major Korean agricultural groups call for maintaining import ban against U.S. beef after new U.S. finding of “mad cow” disease.

June 29, 2005: FM Ban says South Korea will strive to reconvene a new round of Six-Party Talks in July.

June 30, 2005: After meeting with Unification Minister Chung in Washington, Assistant Secretary Hill says the U.S. will not object to South Korea’s proposal of a massive aid program for North Korea, if it rejoins the Six-Party Talks.

June 30, 2005: U.S. negotiator DeTrani meets, though informally, for second time with North Korean officials in New York, while attending an academic conference.