

Remarks on the DPRK Stephen Biegun, U.S. Special Representative for North Korea

Stanford, CA, United States

January 31, 2019

MR BIEGUN: Good afternoon. Thank you, Dr. Shin, and thank you to Stanford University and to the Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center for inviting me here today. I want to add particular thanks to a few representatives of the university community who are here with us today, especially Dr. Sig Hecker, Bob Carlin, and my friend and former colleague, Andy Kim. Secretary of State Pompeo sends his regards to you all, and we are eager to work as closely as possible with your team here at Stanford to continue to benefit from your expertise and advice.

I hope I do not need to tell anybody in this room that here at Stanford is assembled the most formidable collection of expertise on North Korea that can be found anywhere in the United States today. You have in your midst former policy makers, intelligence officials, and scientists who have devoted a large part of their life's work to solving one of the most complex and dangerous challenges we face in the world today: an unresolved war, massive military capabilities on high alert, weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery, and all smack dab in the most geopolitically and economically sensitive geography in the entire world.

In my position as Secretary of State Pompeo's special representative for North Korea, it is my assignment to oversee and lead the broad diplomatic initiative to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. I am only the latest official to take on this task, following behind a line of long – a long line of distinguished diplomats who have devoted themselves to the same. Yet, two and a half decades after it was first found that North Korea was on the cusp of acquiring the means for weapons of mass destruction, we seemingly find ourselves farther away than ever from that goal. The last 25 years was not wasted, though certainly there were most – there were missed opportunities by both the United States and North Korea, and nothing in today's circumstances necessarily guarantees that we will be successful.

However, today we differ in both situation and approach from the past. In President Trump, the United States has a leader who, more so than any previous president, is deeply and personally committed to once and for all bringing an end to 70 years of war and hostility on the Korean Peninsula. In North Korea, a young leader stands atop a country of 25 million people, possessing one of the world's largest armies and nuclear weapons capabilities. And yet Chairman Kim Jong Un has stated his intention to denuclearize and to turn his energies fully to meeting the needs of his people and developing the North Korean economy.

Neither leader is constrained by traditional expectations that might doom their teams to try the exact same approach as in the past, with no expectation of anything but the same failed outcome. Instead, President Trump and Chairman Kim have decided to pursue a top-down approach with a breadth of actions that – if successful – will fundamentally transform relations between our two countries. In the

process of that transformation, we could see a historic set of events in the region that would help establish a more stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia for this generation and for many to come.

It is well known that during the presidential transition after the 2016 election, then-President Obama impressed upon President-elect Trump that the number one danger the United States faced in the world was the burgeoning nuclear weapons and intercontinental ballistic missile programs of North Korea. From that briefing it sounded as if the possibility of conflict on the Korean Peninsula was imminent, and for much of 2017 it seemed that that just might be so. Numerous provocative tests of North Korean ICBMs and ever-larger nuclear weapons caused the escalation of tensions on the Korean Peninsula to their highest level in decades. Tough sanctions were imposed upon North Korea by the United Nations Security Council, and threats and counter threats were hurled between the two countries.

Yet by the end of 2017 something began to shift. Quiet outreach between the two Koreas led to a breakthrough moment of a joint Korean Olympic team participating at the Winter Olympics, followed by a face-to-face meeting between North and South leaders at Panmunjom Village in the demilitarized zone.

Around the same time, President Trump authorized American officials to engage directly with counterparts in North Korea in search of a diplomatic path forward. President Trump then made a bold and courageous decision to engage directly at the leader level with Chairman Kim at the Singapore summit in 2018. The course chosen by President Trump last year to engage directly with Chairman Kim interrupted the trajectory toward possible conflict.

For our part, we have communicated to our North Korean counterparts that we are prepared to pursue – simultaneously and in parallel – all of the commitments our two leaders made in their joint statement at Singapore last summer, along with planning for a bright future for the Korean people and the new opportunities that will open when sanctions are lifted and the Korean Peninsula is at peace, provided that North Korea likewise fulfills its commitment to final, fully verified denuclearization.

There are many challenges that make it especially complicated for the United States and North Korea to embark upon a diplomatic initiative of this magnitude. It is an understatement to say that our two systems are very different. Our relations are predicated on an armistice – or a ceasefire – that has been in place now for more than six decades. We are located in very different parts of the world with very different histories. We have dramatically different views on individual rights and on human rights. And those enduring realities have formed different worldviews about the region and about each other. We also have no trade of any sort, no diplomatic relations, and virtually no ability to communicate directly with one another.

And yet despite these many obstacles, we have managed to sustain engagement now for many months, largely due to the personal determination of President Trump and his consistent willingness to use voice and written word to send positive messages of trust and confidence to Chairman Kim and the North Korean leadership.

Since President Trump's summit with Chairman Kim in Singapore, the United States has remained in steady contact with North Korea. In July, shortly after the groundbreaking summit in Singapore, Secretary of State Pompeo made a follow-up visit to Pyongyang, where he met on extended – for an extended period with Kim Yong Chol, one of Chairman Kim's closest advisors and most senior officials. In September, Secretary of State Pompeo met at the United Nations General Assembly in New York City with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho. In October, the Secretary traveled to Pyongyang, where we met with Chairman Kim, with his sister and close advisor Kim Yo Jong, and again with Kim Yong Chol.

A New Year's speech by Chairman Kim at the beginning of this year reaffirmed his commitment to both denuclearization and economic modernization. Less than three weeks after, Secretary of State Pompeo hosted a senior North Korean delegation in Washington, D.C., led by Kim Yong Chol. This visit, which was just 10 days ago, allowed us to cover a number of outstanding issues and, during the course of an hour-long Oval Office meeting with President Trump, set in motion plans for a second summit between President Trump and Chairman Kim.

Less noticed but nonetheless very important, I also had the opportunity during that visit to hold a first extended working-level discussion with my newly appointed North Korean counterpart, Ambassador Kim Hyok Chol. In our meeting, we had a discussion that was productive, focused, results-oriented, and it laid out the first steps in a plan for comprehensive working-level negotiations ahead. We were satisfied with the outcome of the visit, and in the very near future we'll be pursuing concrete plans to advance all of the elements of the Singapore joint statement.

Over the past many months, not only the President and the Secretary of State, but also the Vice President, National Security Advisor, and other administration senior officials have continuously pressed the goals of our North Korea diplomacy with our friends, partners, and allies around the world, including at the United Nations, at the APEC Summit, at the ASEAN Regional Forum, at the East Asia Summit, at the G20 Summit, and in the many bilateral meetings with counterparts around the world. The skilled and seasoned diplomatic team that I have the privilege to lead at the Department of State has likewise built and maintained the support of partners, friends, and allies around the world to our approach, giving a strong backbone to our diplomacy.

For my part, I have now been in this position for five months. During that time, I've had the opportunity to meet every North Korean official at every level with whom the United States will be engaged in this diplomatic endeavor, from Chairman Kim to my newly appointed counterpart.

In the past five months, I have traveled a lot, with a trip to North Korea, multiple trips to South Korea, two trips to Japan, two to China, two to Russia. In the past week, my team had the opportunity to play host to visits in Washington, D.C., led by delegations – my Chinese counterpart and my Russian counterpart. With both China and Russia, there is the promise of cooperation on the denuclearization of the North Korea peninsula and the establishment of a lasting peace on the peninsula.

North Korea is not just a regional issue, but one of importance to our allies and partners around the world. We meet regularly with the British, Australian, New Zealand, and Canadian counterparts, who have been a critical part of our global efforts and our pressure campaign. Last fall, we had the opportunity to lay out our strategic vision to our NATO allies at the North Atlantic Council and our

partners in the European Union at the Political Security Committee (sic). The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs generously hosted a quad meeting that included my senior counterparts from Britain and Germany. And finally, a week and a half ago, our team had the opportunity to attend an extremely useful and informative international conference on North Korea hosted by my counterpart in Sweden, with American, South Korean, and North Korean participation.

Of course, the purpose of diplomacy is not more meetings. The purpose of the meetings is to produce outcomes and progress.

Over the fall, we and North Korea have gained familiarity among our leaders and our senior officials. We have seen both governments create dedicated positions to advance their diplomacy. We have found a more consistent pattern of communications, though still challenged at times, but the most intensive between our two countries in many years.

While there is still much work to do, we should also not ignore the progress we have made to date. For one, there are no American citizens wrongfully detained today in North Korea. In fact, last fall an American citizen crossed illegally into North Korea on foot from China. Shortly after that, the North Koreans informed us that this person had been detained, interrogated, judged to not pose a threat, and would be expelled from North Korea. Aided by Sweden, our consular protecting power in Pyongyang, this American citizen was on a plane and back in the United States in time for Thanksgiving. I do not need to tell anyone who follows North Korea closely that one year ago this sequence of events could have played out in a very different manner.

It is possible to read too much into something like this, as this was simply the normal action, one that governments around the world take on a daily basis as people enter countries illegally. But with North Korea and the United States, normal has rarely been the norm.

In December, at the direction of Secretary of State Pompeo, the United States, working together with humanitarian aid groups operating in North Korea, eased rules on the delivery of legitimate humanitarian assistance to the people of North Korea. We are now making quick progress, clearing a backlog of approvals that had accumulated at the United Nations sanctions review committee. At the same time, with the confidence that we gained from the normal treatment of the U.S. citizen who illegally entered North Korea last fall, we have also more favorably reviewed requests for travel exemptions for American citizens for purposes of implementing and monitoring these humanitarian aid programs.

In another area of progress since the Singapore summit, the United States and North Korea have cooperated on the return of 55 sets of human remains believed to be those of Americans who fell in the Korean War on the battlefields of North Korea more than 60 years ago. The painstaking work of identifying those remains is under way by the Department of Defense. And just last week, we saw another set of remains confirmed and identified to be those of Frank Julius Suliman, age 20, from Nixon, New Jersey. Sergeant Suliman perished in North Korea in a POW camp at the age of 20 in the bloom of his life.

The Department of Defense is currently in discussion with the North Korean military on plans for ambitious recovery excavations at the site of some of the Korean War's bloodiest and most costly

battles. With more than 5,000 fallen Americans still unaccounted for from the Korean War, President Trump is committed to press for closure for every American family. It is our hope that the progress in remains recovery will take us a step closer to finally healing the wounds of that terrible war.

On the Korean Peninsula, we are seeing a level of cooperation between the North and South that has been absent for a decade and a half and perhaps exceeds any undertaken in the past. In addition to multiple summits between the leaders of South and North Korea, dozens of inter-Korean projects have been undertaken, including people-to-people exchanges, humanitarian assistance, and major surveys of peninsular rail and road infrastructure that both advance and tantalize the potential for economic cooperation that would flow from denuclearization, the lifting of sanctions, and the establishment of a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

The militaries of the North and South together, working through and with the United Nations Command and U.S. Forces Korea, have embarked upon a number of confidence and security building measures that have lowered the threat level and tensions at the Demilitarized Zone. And while there is still much that remains left to do, for the first time in my lifetime the Demilitarized Zone is actually being demilitarized.

I made my most recent visit to Panmunjom Village just before Christmas last year. It was quiet and peaceful, with the restoration of regular communications between the two sides of the border. Not a weapon was to be seen. Not even a sidearm. What an amazing difference from one year ago, when frontline troops on both sides were prepared for imminent conflict.

Last and most important, we've also made some progress on addressing the central issue of our diplomatic engagement: the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. While we would want to be much farther along, and while – than where we currently are, we have made some progress over the last six months with expectations of more to come. It has been more than 400 days since North Korea has undertaken a provocative test of missiles or nuclear weapons. Over the past year, North Korea has taken preliminary steps to dismantle and destroy the test sites used for these missile and nuclear tests: Tongchang-ri and Punggye-ri.

At the last North-South summit in Pyongyang, Chairman Kim committed to allow access for international experts to verify the complete dismantlement and destruction of Tongchang-ri. During the Secretary of State's October meetings in Pyongyang, Chairman Kim likewise committed to invite American experts to ensure the complete destruction of Punggye-ri.

While these sites are not critical parts of the current North Korean missile or nuclear programs, after an interlude of 10 years in which no international inspections of any kind have occurred, they represent a step in the right direction for our two countries to renew cooperation on the steps necessary to give confidence to the process of denuclearization. We will soon be in discussion with our North Korean counterparts on the modalities to follow through on Chairman Kim's commitment for both of these sites.

In addition to the commitments on Tongchang-ri and Punggye-ri, Chairman Kim also committed, in both the joint statement from the aforementioned Pyongyang summit as well as during the Secretary of State's October meetings in Pyongyang, to the dismantlement and destruction of North Korea's

plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities. This complex of sites that extends beyond Yongbyon represents the totality of North Korea's plutonium reprocessing and uranium enrichment programs.

Chairman Kim qualified next steps on North Korea's plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities upon the United States taking corresponding measures. Exactly what these measures are are a matter I plan to discuss with my North Korean counterpart during our next set of meetings. From our side, we are prepared to discuss many actions that could help build trust between our two countries and advance further progress in parallel on the Singapore summit objectives of transforming relations, establishing a permanent peace regime on the peninsula, and complete denuclearization.

Finally and importantly, in describing to us their commitment to dismantle and destroy their plutonium and uranium enrichment facilities, the North Koreans have also added the critical words "and more." This is essential, as there is more – much more – to do beyond these facilities to follow through on the Singapore summit commitment to complete denuclearization.

Before the process of denuclearization can be final, we must also have a complete understanding of the full extent of the North Korean weapons of mass destruction missile programs. We will get that at some point through a comprehensive declaration. We must reach agreement on expert access and monitoring mechanisms of key sites to international standards. And ultimately, we need to ensure the removal and destruction of stockpiles of fissile material, weapons, missiles, launchers, and other weapons of mass destruction.

All of this must be addressed in a roadmap of working-level negotiations that will be essential if we are to put in place the necessary conditions to fundamentally transform U.S.-North Korean relations and establish a peace – a permanent peace – on the Korean Peninsula. And President Trump has made clear that should North Korea follow through on Chairman Kim's commitment to complete denuclearization, the United States will in return exceed anything previously thought possible.

So, with the progress made so far, what remains is where we go next. As I have mentioned, President Trump and Chairman Kim will meet at a second summit at the end of February. President Trump has made clear both to North Korea as well as to our team that he expects significant and verifiable progress on denuclearization, actions that are bold and real, to emerge from that next summit.

We expect to hold working-level negotiations with our North Korean counterparts in advance of the summit, with the intention of achieving a set of concrete deliverables, a roadmap of negotiations, and declaration – a roadmap of negotiations and declarations going forward, and a shared understanding of the desired outcomes of our joint efforts. We have that responsibility to our two leaders, who laid out a bold vision when they met in Singapore last year. We also have that responsibility to the people of the Korean Peninsula.

When President Trump met with Chairman Kim in Singapore, he showed him a vision of what robust economic development could mean for North Korea. This bright future, driven by investment, external engagement, and trade and built with the incredible resources of the Korean Peninsula is also part of our strategy to plan for success. At the appropriate time, with the completion of denuclearization, we are prepared to explore with North Korea and many other countries the best way to mobilize investment, improve infrastructure, enhance food security, and drive a level of

economic engagement that will allow the North Korean people to fully share in the rich future of their Asian neighbors. This prosperity, along with the denuclearization and peace, lies at the core of President Trump's vision for U.S.-North Korea relations.

Much has transpired over the past two years between the United States and North Korea. Much has transpired since the Singapore summit. Much has transpired in just the past month, and much has yet to happen. I think it's fair to say that we have more work ahead of us than we do behind us.

As I have mentioned already, United States policy toward North Korea stands on the foundation of final, fully verified denuclearization. This means the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, their means of delivery, and the means to produce them. But I also want to say again, emphatically, that President Trump's vision is also much, much more, including, as outlined in Singapore last summer, the transformation of U.S.-North Korea relations and the establishment of a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. The President believes in a bright and more secure future for all the people of the Korean Peninsula, in Northeast Asia, and the world.

It is a cliché to say that failure is not an option, but that suggests that failure is a choice rather than a consequence. I have intentionally not focused on the many ways that this could all fail. As the diplomatic record of the past 25 years shows, they are too numerous to count. We need to have contingencies if the diplomatic process fails, which we do. But if we are to avoid failure, it will take the United States, North Korea, and many other nations to make the affirmative choice for a transformed and peaceful Korean Peninsula. The United States has made that choice.

It is the promise of closing the door on 70 years of war and hostility on the Korean Peninsula that led President Trump to Singapore last year. His relentless pursuit of that goal has created the space to achieve everything I've discussed today. Now is the opportunity. Now is the moment. The United States is ready to turn the vision outlined by President Trump and Chairman Kim at Singapore into reality. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR SHIN: So once again, if you have any questions, please write down on postcard and give it to our staff here. So Bobby (ph) can leave now.

So, Bob, you can lead now.

MR CARLIN: I'm not jumping on no stage.

MR SHIN: (Laughter.) You can sit.

MR CARLIN: Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful speech.

MR BIEGUN: Thank you.

MR CARLIN: Really. Want me to lead off? Let me make --

MR BIEGUN: I don't think I have anything left to say.

MR CARLIN: I think – well, we’re going to find out.

MR BIEGUN: Okay.

MR CARLIN: We’re going to find out. I just want to say, I’ve been at this a long time, and I feel like an old diplomatic warhorse. I can hear – sort of hear the future thusly, and I’m jealous because the opportunity is the greatest I have ever seen for progress. Our problem in the past has always been the stars have never quite been in alignment with all the players, and as Steve described it, this is the moment, and we can’t afford to lose it, which is why we’re fortunate to have someone like Steve leading the American team.

These are some questions to me that maybe the group would be interested in hearing your views on. One thing everyone is going to ask you about, I’m pretty sure, is the testimony in the Congress the other day, which was portrayed as challenging, in effect, the basis of the negotiations. As it was played in the press, it suggested that, no, no, the North Koreans will never give up their nuclear program, and therefore unstated is, well, then therefore, why are we trying? So how do you – how do you see it?

MR BIEGUN: Yeah, thank you, Bob, and thanks for joining me today, and thanks for all of your personal efforts in this regard and also your mentoring since I took on this position six months ago. I’d say that I entirely share President Trump’s frustration with the way this intelligence information was briefed and played out over time, and I don’t know what – to what degree it was responsibility of how we in the administration drafted it versus how it was interpreted or how the media reacted to it. But I think it’s very important to step back and look at this with a broader perspective. First of all, I want to say I have enormous respect for my colleagues in the Intelligence Community. I work on a daily basis with them. They are absolutely partners in the efforts that we’re trying to do to succeed in the diplomacy in North Korea. They have given us uniformly good analysis, including from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and I’m not at all critical of the information.

But we also have to understand what intelligence information is. Intelligence information is data and information combined with analysis that’s given to policymakers, and if you take it out of context, you – if you divorce it from policy, then you have a very incomplete picture, and this is really where my frustration is with the story that played out last week. North Korea has a significant and potentially dangerous capacity in weapons of mass destruction. We all know that. North Korea has given us little indication that they have yet made the decision to completely dismantle and destroy that capability. We all know that.

Therefore, ‘what’ is the question, and what President Trump has done is directed the Secretary of State to engage diplomatically through a combination of pressure and incentives to see if we can invite North Korea to make a different set of choices. That’s the complete picture. It’s not that we’re deceived, it’s not that we don’t know what’s going on, it’s not that we don’t take the threat with the gravity that it requires. And by the way, we have enormous capacities to deter that threat as well. So if I were presenting this same information, I would say that we have the potential here for a grave threat to the United States of America, and therefore it is all the more urgent that we engage diplomatically with North Korea to see if we can change the trajectory of their policies by changing the trajectory of our own. And that’s what we’re trying to do.

So my frustration isn't with the accuracy of the information. It's how it's presented and how it's interpreted. You cannot divorce the intelligence information from policy. The intelligence information is critical as an underpinning for the policy, but the policy is to address the threat and that's what my frustration was last week.

MR CARLIN: You said some – you said some things which sound familiar to me and I'm sure some familiar to the North Koreans about essentially if you choose path A, good things will happen, your future will be wonderful. But you've said something up here several times, which seems to me to be very different, and I suspect the North Koreans will hear it differently as well. And what you said implied that the United States finally sees a place for North Korea in Northeast Asia. That's critical, and the question is: What is that place? How does it fit with our alliances? How does it fit with our concept, our strategic concept in Northeast Asia? Doesn't all that have to be discussed and worked out, obviously internally but also with the North Koreans as well?

MR BIEGUN: Yeah. So I heard some of the criticisms of the Singapore summit – I was in the private sector at the time – not enough preparation before, not enough detail in the agreements coming out. I'll tell you that as a negotiator, which is my profession largely in corporate and government life, I could not have a better mandate. I have four streams of potential cooperation to discuss with North Korea: transforming our relations, building a permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, denuclearization, and the fourth, which I've addressed briefly here, which is the return of remains from the Korean War – doesn't involve the same level of negotiation, but should emphasize it's every bit as important that we heal the wound of that war as part of the process of resolving the larger dispute on the Korean Peninsula. And the good news is we're making a lot of progress in that regard, as I mentioned.

But in the other areas, what's complicit in that is this is – at the core of this is denuclearization. It absolutely – the essential test of this is removing the weapons of mass destruction programs in North Korea. But the issue is much larger than that. It's something of a trite trick in Washington that when you can't solve the problem, you enlarge the problem, but here the President has embraced it full on. I don't mean it – excuse me – I don't mince my words when I say that he is unconstrained by the assumptions of his predecessors. President Trump is ready to end this war. It is over. It is done. We are not going to invade North Korea. We are not seeking to topple the North Korean regime. We need to advance our diplomacy alongside our plans for denuclearization in a manner that sends that message clearly to North Korea as well. We are ready for a different future. It's bigger than denuclearization, while it stands on the foundation of denuclearization, but that's the opportunity we have and those are the discussions we will be having with the North Koreans.

MR CARLIN: You listed all the meetings that the Secretary of State and you have had with a variety of North Korean officials, and they're usually described in the newspapers as one sentence or so and then people move on. Seems to me it's critically important, after 2017, that this President was able to meet with Kim Jong Un, the Secretary was able to meet with him as well, you were at the table with him as well. What's your sense of how important it is they have this third dimension, this personal contact, so that you're not just reading statements, you really get a sense of the person, where they're coming from, how they think, how they react?

MR BIEGUN: So I'll tantalize you a bit. I listed some of our meetings, Bob, not all of our meetings.

MR CARLIN: Oh. Sure.

MR BIEGUN: But let me also say that there are some things that are very different here. You said you heard some things that are familiar here. One of the sad realities I had to confront about two months ago was I haven't had an original idea yet on North Korea. Every idea that we're seeking to pursue has been conceived of by that long line of distinguished diplomats that I described in my speech, including the gentleman sitting next to me.

But there are some things different. So if it's not the combination of possibilities and what our expectations are and what they might arrive at, what's different about this moment? Well, nothing less important than the leaders and the relationship between the leaders, and that has real tangible consequences on how we execute our diplomacy. President Trump has laid out a vision that's created a room for maneuver for my team and for the Secretary of State that is probably bigger than any of my predecessors who've served in this position in the past, inside the government as well as outside the government.

But that's not inconsequential, especially inside the North Korean system, where Chairman Kim has likewise dictated these things. And so when we see his New Year's address, where he declares not to us but to the people of North Korea that he has made the decision to denuclearize, that's creating room for us to begin this discussion in a manner that gives us hope we can get to the goal we seek. When he says to his people that he is shifting the focus of his leadership to developing the economy of North Korea – that we can do together. That's not an adversarial approach at all. And so that's very different as well. The messages from the top, the space created by a top-down diplomacy, creates very different potential for how this diplomacy can proceed. And I am hopeful that the same amount of momentum that it has provided to our team is going to be matched with the momentum that our counterparts in North Korea bring to the table.

MR CARLIN: You said that the U.S. is now prepared for or is committed to parallel and simultaneous action with the North Koreans. And I think we've heard that from the Secretary of State, actually, before. But that suggests a very different approach than the second line that we hear, which is we're not going to do anything until you do everything. So it seems to me people would be confused. How should we understand what's going to be coming down the pike?

MR BIEGUN: Okay, so you're asking me a question for the benefit of the audience, Bob, because I know you know the answer to this.

MR CARLIN: That's fine.

MR BIEGUN: Because, among other things, what Bob does for me – with me in discussion – is he reads the North Korean media, and he's one of the nation's leading experts on parsing every single word, which is very important when you're reading the Korean newswire KCNA or their state newspaper *Rodong Sinmun*. And I would encourage any of you – and you, sir – to apply the same careful attention to the words that we use when we say we will not lift sanctions until denuclearization is complete. That is correct. We didn't say we won't do anything until you do everything, but it's often – it's often cast as that, and that's why an opportunity like this today is so important to be able to maybe put a little bit more flesh on the bones of our diplomacy.

Let me go back to a larger issue, which is one that confounds negotiators in every dimension, which is sequencing. What do – who – what am I going to do, what are you going to do, and who's going to act first? And that's what we're trying to resolve and get away from. In the past, the shorthand interpretation of our policy is more or less what Bob helpfully laid out as a strawman, which is, you do everything first and then we'll begin to think about whether or not we're going to do anything in response, and that is not our policy and has not been our policy. What we're talking about is simultaneously looking at ways to improve relations, looking at ways to advance a more stable and peaceful, and ultimately, a more legal peace regime on the Korean Peninsula – how we advance denuclearization. And an added dimension that President Trump introduced in Singapore is how do we also proceed toward an end where there's a brighter economic future for North Korea to support the goals that Chairman Kim has laid out to focus on the economic development of his country. And the goal will be to bring this this all together at the same time, and I have this – I have this perfect outcome moment where the last nuclear weapon leaves North Korea, the sanctions are lifted, the flag goes up in the embassy and the treaty is signed in the same hour.

Now, that's an ideal, I know, and these things are going to move haltingly along different courses. But they also can be mutually reinforcing, because if we're doing the right thing with each other in relations, it makes it easier to do the right thing with each other on nuclear weapons. And if we're doing the right thing on nuclear weapons, it makes a lot more conceivable that there would be a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. And so all of it has to work in concert as well.

This is an ideal, I know, and as I said earlier in a private conversation, when I hear the words come out of my own mouth, it even sounds slightly Pollyannaish. But I am absolutely convinced, and more importantly, the President of the United States is convinced that it's time to move past 70 years of war and hostility on the Korean Peninsula. There is no reason for this conflict to persist any longer.

MR CARLIN: I want to ask you a question about normalization, but I want to make a quick observation about reading North Korean media. I was in Pyongyang once and we were having a meeting with the vice foreign minister, and I said to him, "Mr. Vice Foreign Minister, can I ask a favor of you? You can transmit it to the party newspaper *Rodong Sinmun*," and he said, "Sure, what is it?" I said, "Could you have them print it with the lines farther apart?" And he said, "Well, why?" And I said, "Well, my job is to read between the lines, and I need more space." He laughed.

MR BIEGUN: And he fell for it?

MR CARLIN: Yeah, he did. He thought it was funny.

Normalization – where does that fit? In your view, in the sequence, how useful of a card is that or is it something that needs to be withheld? Is it going to cause complications or is it something that should just come naturally as we describe to the North Koreans their future?

MR BIEGUN: Yeah, I think it's only possible if it's organic and natural. So it has to be a consequence of what we're doing in the other areas and – but at the same time we can think about steps we'd take along the road in order to get us closer to that point. We have big issues with North Korea on weapons of mass destruction, and that drove the sense of crisis over the past couple of years, over the past generation, but also in working with – in working with North Korea, we have a lot of other issues in the

relationship that we have to resolve too. My theory of the case would be that we can resolve issues of disagreement outside of the weapons of mass destruction issue much more effectively through engagement than through the separation that we have right now. I am not kidding when I say it is difficult for us to communicate with each other. Those of you in the room who are seasoned hands of U.S.-North Korea diplomacy know this. It is a convoluted, multistage process simply to get a message from one side to the other. Goodwill and authority from the top can speed that process up for sure – and here I mean on the North Korean side – but still it isn't easy. And we have to find ways to communicate better with each other, and that's one of the things we're certainly focusing on.

MR CARLIN: We just got a note and I can't see it without my glasses.

MR BIEGUN: It says "five minutes."

MR CARLIN: Oh, okay, okay. Between the lines you need the --

MR BIEGUN: Is that five minutes left in the session or five minutes before we go to public Q&A?

MR CARLIN: The Q&A.

MR BIEGUN: Okay.

MR CARLIN: Okay. The role or the space for people-to-people, cultural exchanges, things like that with – you see those as a useful adjunct? Is it just sort of fluff? How are you going to integrate it? How important do you think the North Koreans see it?

MR BIEGUN: We have a lot of experience in this because this is a tool that we used – we've used for generations in other adversarial relationships. North Korea hasn't had such a breadth of experience on how to move past tensions with adversaries and become former adversaries, and – but they clearly have an appreciation for it. In case you did miss, there was a cultural performance troupe in Beijing last week, and it's not lost on the North Koreans either the important role that these type of exchanges play in accepting each other's cultures and in accepting each other and building the soft sinews of a relationship. And so I'm sure there are plenty of areas that we could explore in this that would build momentum to the other parts of our diplomacy.

We're at an inflection point here because we have been in a campaign of maximum pressure for almost two years now, building up and certainly escalating and peaking in 2017, but there's still a substantial amount of impediments to any normal exchange of any kind between our two countries. And part of the challenge that we are doing, we have to do is we have to walk and chew gum at the same time. We will sustain the pressure campaign; at the same time, we are trying to advance the diplomatic campaign, and we have to find the right balance between those two. Areas like cultural exchanges or people-to-people initiatives that you described seem to me a very obvious place where we could begin to make progress in that environment.

MR CARLIN: Got one – room for one more.

MR BIEGUN: Sure.

MR CARLIN: I deliberately did not talk about the nuclear issue because (a) there are going to be a lot of questions and (b) I think it's important, from what you said, for people to understand that you view a resolution of the nuclear issue in a broader context – that is, you're not going to be able to just focus on that and get it done. Lots of things are going to have to come together. Do you want to make a few observations?

MR BIEGUN: Well, let me say first that you are absolutely correct, but that should be in no way interpreted as diminishing the degree to which that is the threshold challenge that we face. The President, Secretary of State, entire administration are devoted to the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea. If we do not address the weapons of mass destruction issue on the Korean Peninsula today, we will have an Asia Pacific nuclear weapons challenge tomorrow, and we all need to keep that front of mind. We already see editorial opinion in regional newspapers calling for governments to begin to think about exactly this outcome. We have to address this, and we have to address it in absolute terms as well as in relative terms.

But in relative terms, we're also not demanding that this be the starting point. As I said, in parallel we're willing to look at a lot of other things that we can do together that also build the confidence and reduce the sense of risk or threat that would potentially drive a country to want to sustain that kind of capacity. It's not necessary for North Korea to be a safe and stable country to have weapons of mass destruction. In fact, the one remaining issue that could potentially lead to conflict on the Korean Peninsula is the presence of weapons of mass destruction.

(Break.)

MR SHIN: Okay, so thanks for all your questions. I got (inaudible) questions, and if he was to go through all those questions, you have to – you might stay until late afternoon here. So I pick five, then see how it goes.

MR BIEGUN: Okay, and I'll try to be --

MR SHIN: So the first one, it's about terminology of denuclearization. So the question is, "Do U.S. and North Korea share what that means?"

MR BIEGUN: So coming out of the Singapore summit – I'm not telling you anything you don't know, that there was no detailed definition or shared agreement of what denuclearization entails. Our view is that it entails the elimination of the totality of the weapons of mass destruction programs in North Korea, consistent with the requirements of international law. It also is going to require the means of production of those weapons, as well as the means of delivery, the intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Holistically, we want to see North Korea move into a very different posture, but they have to be comfortable moving into that posture as well, and that's part of the efforts of our diplomacy. So we do not have a specific and agreed definition of what final, fully verified denuclearization or comprehensive, verifiable, irreversible denuclearization – whatever your preferred term of art – is. We do need to have a shared understanding of what the outcome is going to be, and within the space that that creates, we should be able to also agree on the steps necessary to achieve a mutually accepted

outcome. We do have a well-developed view inside the United States of America on what this entails, but that's something that over time you'll also have to come to agreement with the North Koreans on.

MR SHIN: Okay. They had a lot of concerns in both Washington and Seoul about the future of alliance. The question is: Is the removal of U.S. troops from South Korea an option to give incentive to North Korea for giving up their nukes?

MR BIEGUN: So we are not involved in any diplomatic discussion, full stop, that would suggest this tradeoff. It has never been discussed. The future of the alliance is an important question, and sustaining the future of that alliance is something that both sides have to fully commit themselves to. I have the – I have the assignment to work on North Korea. The alliance management issues affect my work, but they are not my central responsibility. Those are the responsibilities of our East Asia and Pacific director at the Department of State.

Let me put in a point of emphasis here that the Secretary of State and the President have nominated a tremendously talented individual in Retired General Dan (sic) Stilwell to lead that effort, and his nomination is still stuck in the Congress. We need our diplomats in place, and we need our diplomats on the field for exactly reasons like this.

But the alliance does play an important role and is an important foundation for the success that we hope to achieve in the Korean – on the Korean Peninsula, and I am hopeful that we'll continue to be able to make progress on that regard.

MR SHIN: Okay. So next question is: Given domestic politics in the United States, so how can you convince North Koreans that any major agreements that you make now can and will continue after Trump leaves office?

MR BIEGUN: Yeah. So one of the things that the Secretary of State has been quite clear with our team on is that we need to plan for success. So part of our planning for success is trying to create a picture of what that bright future looks like if all the endeavors that I've described today make the progress that we hope they do. Part of that success also is making those achievements durable, and we spend a lot of time focused on that.

For my part, I am a frequent visitor to Capitol Hill. Shortly before I got on the plane Friday to come out here to Palo Alto, I spoke to two senators who had called wanting updates, wanting to know where we are on North Korea. And it's not just me; it's our entire team at the department are focused on working closely with the other institutions of government to ensure that we're bringing everyone along at the same time. And that is ultimately towards that concept of planning for success and making this a durable outcome.

One of the benefits of working on the North Korea issues is it is actually one of the more bipartisan issues in Washington, D.C., today. Notwithstanding some of the gotcha culture and some of the reporting that we see, even over the – of events over the past week, for the most part, when I'm on Capitol Hill, whether it's with Democrats or Republicans, they all want us to succeed. We're going to have to pass a test of scrutiny from the United States Congress in whatever we ultimately achieve here, and it will be important therefore that this be a meaningful and verifiable outcome. But in the

event we're able to produce that outcome, I have the highest level of confidence there will be strong, bipartisan support, because President Trump isn't just giving vision to a personal point of view when he looks at a future for the Korean Peninsula that moves past 70 years of war and hostility; I think he's speaking for the entire country, Democrats and Republicans alike.

MR SHIN: Okay. So how do you see the U.S.-China relations playing out in the U.S.-DPRK relationship?

MR BIEGUN: So it's well known that United States and China are engaged in some fairly significant areas of disagreement, primarily focused but not exclusively focused around international economics. Even as I sit here today, there's talks ongoing in Washington, D.C., in attempt to strike an agreement to move forward beyond those disagreements.

I have a counterpart in China who is likewise responsible for diplomacy with North Korea, and I've had a chance to meet with him on more than one occasion, as I mentioned in my speech. I played host to him and his team in Washington, D.C., just last Wednesday, just a week ago yesterday.

What the Chinese have told us is that they will compartmentalize North Korea from the other areas of dispute in U.S.-China relations, and my inclination is to take them at their word until we have evidence to the contrary. And so far I think the track record has been pretty good.

The reason why this works is because China isn't doing anything in North Korea for the United States. China's policies in North Korea are not a favor to our country. China is doing this because it's in their interests. China does not want a conflict on the Korean Peninsula. China does not believe that weapons of mass destruction induce the stability over time that we all want on the Korean Peninsula. And China sees the opportunity that would flow from a normalized relationship with North Korea in terms of regional economic engagement. And North-South-China-Russia commerce has potentially enormous benefits, and more so for China in some of the parts of China that are most economically challenged today in the north.

So China has plenty of reasons of its own to be working alongside us, and they are. And so – and I'm a big fan of countries acting in their own interests, in the context of values as well, but when the – the core of the Chinese policy is they're acting in their own interests, and I think we can make a lot of progress. I've described it in other settings as this: that China is with us 100 percent some of the way. And that's what we need from them.

MR SHIN: Okay. According to Politico, you will be going to meet with North Korean counterparts early next week. So is it true? And also, if so, when do you expect to finalize a date and location for the second summit?

MR BIEGUN: So I was writing an email two weeks ago, and just after I hit send I got a news article about the information I was just distributing to my colleagues in the government about something we had decided. And it is amazing to me the speed with which information flows inside the nation's capital, but I will tell you a newsflash of my own: It's not always right. Okay?

MR SHIN: Fake news.

MR BIEGUN. Yeah. No, I'm not saying fake news. I'm just saying it's not always right.

What I would say is that we have every expectation in the very near future to be engaging on a face-to-face basis with our North Korean counterparts. Some elements of what – I haven't seen the Politico article so I can't respond to that, but I'll give you some – but directionally, yes, I can confirm that, and we have high expectations that we'll make progress in those discussions.

But as it flows to other things like summit locations, et cetera, I have seen definitive judgments on places and times, but especially places, that I know from being in the midst of the conversations are either overstated or untrue. We will in due time announce a summit with the North Koreans. President Trump has already said publicly that we will be doing – we will be meeting – the two leaders will be meeting at the end of February, and I expect that to happen. It's a complicated business to put together a summit, particularly a North Korean-U.S. summit. There's a lot of – just a lot of logistical and process issues that have to be worked through and resolved. But the President very much wants to have a second summit with Chairman Kim. I and my team very much believe that this will be an opportunity to add momentum to the diplomacy, and we're looking forward to negotiations between now and that summit to provide a set of deliverables in order to make some meaningful progress on all the dimensions of the Singapore joint statement but especially and including denuclearization.

MR SHIN: Okay. Then the final question – it's from me, actually: So how can academic institutions like Stanford support or help your diplomatic efforts?

MR BIEGUN: Well, Dr. Shin, I said it in my remarks, but I'll say it again. You have the most formidable collection of expertise on North Korea anywhere in the country right here, so you've already created the foundation for it. You've attracted the talent here, and it makes it interesting for a policy maker like myself to be here, not just to speak but also to learn. And I had the opportunity earlier today and will have more opportunity during the course of the day to engage in a conversation where it's not simply me telling you what our policies are but getting thoughtful critiques or advice from that formidable collection of expertise you have here.

But I also want to say you provide a very pleasant surroundings to visit. It's a lot different in other parts of the country than it is in Palo Alto today.

MR SHIN: So we are – winter is a good time to come back. (Laughter.)

MR BIEGUN: Yeah. But lastly, you also provide a platform for serious policy discussion. I don't need to tell anybody in this room that the conversation in Washington oftentimes is – nears toxic, and the ability to have a thoughtful policy discussion like this to discuss the pros and cons is a welcome, welcome opportunity. I am sure that your scholars and your visiting fellows in the course of their work will reflect on some of the policy ideas we've laid out today and will critique them fairly or will support them as they see fit. That's what we ask them, to share that independent voice of academia and the seasoned experience that you have accumulated here at your center and on the university's campus, and do it for the country. You have a role to play, just like I do and just like everyone else working on this, so thank you for that.

MR SHIN: Okay. So with that, I want to end our session. But once again, thank you so much for your wonderful speech and very candid conversation. So hopefully you can come back and we can host you again in the coming weeks or months.

MR BIEGUN: Okay. Thank you.

MR SHIN: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

###