DEFENSE FORUM FOUNDATION
Defense and Foreign Policy Forum

“Is There Hope for North Korea's Future?”

Welcome and Moderator:
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Speakers:
KIM Seong Min,
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SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Good afternoon, if I can have your attention please, please do continue to enjoy your lunch, we’re going to go ahead and get our program started because I want to allow as much time for question and answer. I know all of you are here because you’re interested in the North Korea issue. My name is Suzanne Scholte, President of the Defense Forum Foundation, and I want to welcome you today. Before we get started I have a few people in the audience that I’d like to recognize. From the Embassy of Korea, First Secretary Mrs. Kang Pil Ho is seated over here, thank you for being with us. [Applause]
We’re also honored to also have with us today the DC Director of Reporters Without Borders, this is an amazing NGO that fights for press freedom all over the world, it’s a real honor to have Delphine Halgand with us today. [Applause]

And then of course, one of my favorite NGOs, because I’m a Vice-Chair, we also have with us from the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea, Roberta Cohen, the Chairman of that Committee; [Applause] and Greg Scarlatoiu, the Executive Director. . [Applause] I just want to mention for all of you that work on the Hill as well as the people in the media, this is the go-to organization in the English-speaking world for the documented information on the North Korean human rights issues, publishing reports all the time from the ‘Hidden Gulag’ to the security system of North Korea, this is an excellent source of reference for those of you that are focused on the North Korea issue.

I also want to introduce from the Defense Forum Foundation, our Vice-Chairman, the Honorable Ty McCoy. [Applause] And from the DFF staff Henry Song who will be translating for us, so we’re really appreciative of him, and Jinhee Kim who’s interning for us. [Applause]

Thank you all for coming. I know there’s a lot that is going on right now, and that’s no overstatement, in the world today. So, I really appreciate you coming here today and your interest in the North Korea issue. The North Korea human rights issue has been a labor of love for me for many years and we’re here today to discuss the question, ‘Is there hope for North Korea’, and we have with us some of the folks who can best answer that question. The first speaker is Kim Seong Min, who is the winner of the Reporters Without Borders Media Award, and also the Asia Democracy and Human Rights Award, for his work advocating for human rights in North Korea. He is the founder and director of Free North Korea Radio, which is a defectors-based and run radio station that’s broadcasting into North Korea. According to independent surveys it is the most popular station broadcasting into North Korea and people in North Korea are risking their lives to listen to it because they know it’s their own people that are sending these messages in. Kim was a former captain in the North Korean Army, and escaped to China, but was caught in China. The Chinese, knowing that he had served in the military knew that he would be executed if he was sent back to North Korea, but they repatriated him anyway, which goes against the international agreement that the government of China has signed. He was sent back, tortured, and then sent to be transported to Pyongyang where he was going to be executed for the crime of leaving North Korea without permission. However, he was able to escape by jumping off from a moving train and fled again to China where he was sheltered by some people who were sympathetic to the refugees. He was able to contact his South Korean uncle who was able to send support for him. So, he eventually was able to escape and live in freedom in South Korea. Since that time, he’s been one of the most active leaders among the North Korean defectors and served in many, many positions of leadership including Chairman of the North Korean Defectors Association, which is a group that covers all the defector groups in South Korea. I’m also very proud of the fact that he’s also chaired the annual North Korea Freedom Week, which we started here in Washington, D.C. in 2004, but we moved it to Seoul in 2010 and he’s been the one that’s been chairing that effort ever since. I also consider him my ‘dong-seng’ – I don’t know if I said that right – my little brother, Kim Seong Min. [Applause]

[Translated from Korean:]

KIM SEONG MIN: Thank you. Every year in April we host ‘North Korea Freedom Week’, so for me it’s been 7 times that I’ve stood in this place and shared with you all, including some new faces today, news regarding North Korea. Starting from two years ago, according to the recommendations of President Suzanne Scholte, we have held North Korea Freedom Week in Seoul, South Korea. And soon, in Pyongyang that is about to collapse, we will have a North Korea Freedom Week event there, and when that happens I would like to invite all of you.
There’s no reaction!... [Laughter] [Applause]

Thank you.

To us North Korean human rights activists and North Korean defector groups and defectors, the Defense Forum Foundation and Suzanne are a very important group and organization. This time around, again due to the help of the Defense Forum Foundation, we brought the North Korean refugee film 48M to Washington, D.C. to have a screening here. This film, 48M, as you can see from the handout, signifies the shortest distance in the border area between China and North Korea, the 48 meters that separates China and North Korea, and vividly shows the reality of escape and arrest and what the North Korean citizens go through. Last September 5th, in the South Korean National Assembly, in front of 20 National Assemblymen and women, we held a screening of this film. On September 9th, in Geneva, Switzerland, we held another screening for diplomats and UN officials involved with North Korean human rights issue. And the day after tomorrow, right here in this same building, we will have another screening of the film, here on Capitol Hill.

Still no response!?.... [Laughter] [Applause]

So yes, I ask all of you to come to that screening and see the film; it’s got great content – we interviewed over 200 North Korean defectors and their testimonies are shown in the film. And now, according to the order and direction of President Suzanne Scholte, I will talk about the current situation in North Korea, the power structure of the regime right now, and forecasts for the future.

The material I have before me that I will share are not the words of the North Korean defector Kim Seong Min, but, let me just say – there are 25,000 North Korean defectors in South Korea right now – and among those are former members of the North Korean Worker’s Party, former members of the diplomatic corps, defectors who were former spies and agents for the regime, and also many who are currently considered to be North Korea experts. Their opinions and analyses are here in this material, and with great responsibility, I will deliver this message from them to all of you today.

First of all, I would like to share about the power structure of the North Korea regime. As you know in North Korea, the regime consists of a 3rd generation hereditary succession that started with Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il, and now, Kim Jong Un – that is North Korea today. We like to say that nowhere else in the world do we see this, of a three generation of rule handed down; the current ruler, Kim Jong Un, who was handed power, is weak compared to the past rulers of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il; he has been handed over a regime that is much weaker, and that is the regime he is trying to control right now.

Our conclusion looking at the current Kim Jong Un regime is that, compared to the past rule of Kim Jong Il, it is not a sole rule of Kim Jong Un, but there is Jang Seong Taek, Kim Jong Un’s uncle, and there seems to be a sharing or division of power between Kim Jong Un and Jang Song Taek. The common phrase being used by North Korean experts and even North Korean citizens themselves, is the term ‘the Jang Song Taek brigade or division’. Looking carefully at the North Korean power structure today, is that Kim Jong Un is like a scarecrow inserted into the power structure just for show, and all the people that Jang Song Taek used to work with in the past in the Korean Worker’s Party and those that were part of his inner circle, these people are now the ones who are in the main power structure of the regime right now; these are people who were involved with Jang in international affairs and in the youth division.

The best representative example of this is when Jang Seong Taek was in charge of the youth division of the Worker’s Party, one of the people he mentored, Choi Ryong Hae, is now the top power
holder in the North Korean military right now, installed by Jang. And, it would take too long for me to name all the names, but all the people who used to be in the same level of power and influence as Jang Seong Taek, after Jang rose in prominence and power, all these people were purged. So, one way to look at the situation is that in North Korea, Jang is the real power holder and power maker, and Kim Jong Un really has no one around him; some come to this conclusion.

In the North Korean military, due to the military-first policy, there is a perception that the military holds all the power and they have the key to power, but there is also analysis that this is not so. And one of the best examples is, most recently the top vice-marshals/commander of the military, disappeared without a trace in North Korea. The old generals, the one who fought alongside Kim Il Sung in fights against the Japanese, the ones who held the greatest influence and power in the military, one of them named Oh Geuk Ryul – who is considered to be one of the most powerful in the military – two months ago in front of the 27 year old Kim Jong Un, he along with his family and in front of them, had to swear his allegiance and sing and basically act like a child trying to win parents’ affection, before the young leader. We saw this through the North Korean TV, and we said to ourselves that even the old-timers, the power-holders had to kowtow and humiliate themselves before Kim Jong Un.

Simply put, in North Korea, Jang Seong Taek seems like he is the real power holder in the country; one of the most important things in holding power is the ability, or the power to appoint people to different positions, and to remove people from different positions; Jang Seong Taek is the one who is doing this right now.

Regarding how Kim Jong Un is ruling over North Korea, as we have seen on TV, he is doing the best to imitate and mimic his grandfather, Kim Il Sung. Starting from the looks, to the way he acts when he meets North Korean children and North Korean soldiers; he tries to imitate his grandfather and that is how he is trying to rule in North Korea right now.

He is also publicly introducing his wife, Ri Sol Ju; putting on performances where American movies and cultural icons are displayed and shown in these performances and shows, such as showing Mickey Mouse in the background; and trying to show a new, never-before-seen North Korea.

Regarding whether these actions are having any effect on the North Korean people, we say no, none whatsoever – they are not so much directed internally in North Korea, but these things are all for the outside world to see. It is as if Kim Jong Un is saying to the world, ‘Look, this is the North Korea I am leading and look at all the changes that are happening’ – and to us it just seems like an outwardly gesture.

Now, regarding the question of whether having foreign media icons and showing off his wife, whether these are Kim Jong Un’s own ideas, we look at this as really Jang Seong Taek, and his wife, Kim Jong Un’s aunt, Kim Kyoung Hui, who is controlling all these things from behind the scenes; The Kim Jong Un regime is basically following all these things that are being directed by Jang and his wife.

What we have to focus on is that Kim Jong Un’s North Korea is not like the North Korea of Kim Jong Il, when things were organized and impeccable – that is all gone now. Rather, we see the young dictator, who has been intoxicated by his own youthfulness and confidence - his youthful desires and wants being reflected directly to his politics and policies; this is the current situation that we see in North Korea right now.

Regarding the transfer of power from Kim Jong Il to Kim Jong Un, something that a lot of people have worried about, that has occurred without much difficulty. But looking at it carefully, we see the following: we call North Korea, and talk to North Korean citizens in North Korea, and in our
conversations with them, we hear that the North Korean people, when it comes to Kim Jong Un, whether his regime stays or goes, they could not care at all about that. For them, the average citizens, their main worry and concern is just for themselves to be able to eat and live and survive. However, the elites, those in power – the higher in power they are, we see them concentrating around the Kim Jong Un regime in a quick manner. We see this as sort of a ‘lessons learned’ from the days of Kim Jong Il when he took over power from his father, Kim Il Sung, when people who did not act quick, they were immediately purged.

So when we look at North Korean society now, the basic structure, of a pyramid or a triangle, with the people at the bottom and those in power at the top, instead of this ‘normal’ structure, we now have an upside-down triangle or pyramid where the elites are at the top, and the average citizens, the people, are at the bottom and just don’t care or concern themselves with what is going on at the top. It’s a very dangerous situation right now, a very dangerous regime right now in North Korea.

So Kim Jong Un is trying to do things like economic reform, and the best example of that is the June 28th Economic Order called ‘On the Establishing of a New Economic Management System in Our Own Style’, which is basically the regime telling the people, ‘you keep a small percentage of what you make and/or grow’. ‘Whatever products you make, you can keep a little bit of it’; he announced a seemingly ‘new’ economic order to the people.

But when you look at this carefully, this is not the regime giving up on a socialist, central planning, economic model, but rather it is a situation where the regime felt that because nothing else seemed to be working, they just gave whatever they could not control, over to the people. In effect, they just said ‘you people deal with the problem on your own’. In North Korea right now there are a lot of state entities, companies, owned and operated by the regime itself. These are industries such as military/defense industries, and 1st, 2nd, 3rd tier, large entities where the regime still maintains complete control. But the companies and factories that fall under this new June 28th Order are entities that are small, in the provincial areas, and unproductive and ineffective factories that didn’t produce anything for more than a decade or so.

So, we can be sure that this so-called new order cannot have an effect on the average North Korean citizen right now. Rather we see this as further alienating and driving the regular citizens away from the regime.

Now, looking at future forecasts regarding North Korea, as I said before, the elites in the regime, their struggle and fight for power will continue; and Kim Jong Un’s youthful vigor, his grand visions for the country in terms of policy and planning, his confidence, etc., will actually lead to an imbalance in the regime, and an inequality in the economic state of the regime.

So, if these things continue, North Korea, while it looks like it is reforming and new things are happening in the country, in reality greater chaos than what was ever experienced during Kim Jong Il’s regime will happen, and rapid chaos will happen.

I will mention again that now, there are 25,000 North Korean defectors in South Korea now. And because of this, we can engage in cell phone conversations with people in North Korea and in China. What we see happening is that people inside North Korea, either inside the country or when they sneak out into China, with smuggled-in cell phones, are able to send out information to the outside world, and this is what is going on right now.

When we look into the hearts and minds of the North Korean citizens through these phone conversations and through the information that is coming out now, these people really, really do not care about the Kim Jong Un regime. Whether Kim Jong Un shows or plays American movies or
music or whether he issues some new economic order, they do not care at all and show no interest at all in these things. Now, the mentality of the North Korean people is that, “I just need to have money so that I can feed myself/my family and live and survive.” “To make and earn this money, I will do anything and everything.”

I will say again that the seemingly strong and mighty North Korean regime, this Kim Jong Un regime, IF it continues the way it is going, really, in about two to three years, the North Korean regime will collapse. These are thoughts that go through my mind when I think of the regime right now.

First of all, the regime never had in its history another power holder in the background as we now see with Jang Seong Taek; Kim Jong Un, before he knew it, had created a shadowy, secondary ruler in Jang.

In the past the North Korean citizens felt that loyalty to the Party was the greatest goal and aim in life, but now, any sense of loyalty to the regime has disappeared, and instead there is a shift in the North Korean citizens’ values in that all they care about now is just making money to survive and live.

Also, the entity that was the source of stability, and the strongest supporter and enabler of the regime in the past – the military - the military is no longer able to function like it used to in the past. Right now Jang Seong Taek’s friend, someone by the name of Choi Ryong Hae, who has never had military experience, he is now at the top position of power in the military, solely on the basis of him having been a friend and close confidant of Jang Seong Taek in the past.

In other words, now, the sense of allegiance and loyalty in the military is gone and replaced with connections and who a person knows for advancement and survival.

When you take all these things into consideration, the North Korean regime – if it goes long, will last three years and then collapse, if it continues the way it is going right now.

So this is my talk for today, regarding the current situation and what is going on in North Korea right now, and this time, again on the orders of Suzanne, I will talk briefly about Free North Korea Radio.

Recently, on August 19th, the North Korean regime threatened to kill me and other North Korean defector leaders by releasing a threatening press release. So I looked into why they wanted to kill me, and I found out that through the Rodong Shinmun and the KCNA North Korean television, that they said “the bastard Kim Seong Min who is the director of the Free North Korea Radio sent an agent to North Korea to destroy and topple a statue of Kim Il Sung; therefore, we cannot forgive that S.O.B.”

Then the regime aired a press conference that purported to show the North Korean defector that according to the regime, I had sent on a mission to North Korea to carry out this act of destroying a Kim Il Sung statue. But when I saw the man’s face, I remember thinking that I did not recognize him, nor did I remember ever having met him.

We have around 20 to 30 visitors to our radio station (every day?), FNKR, and he was one of thousands of visitors that I met through the radio station, and I don’t know how the North Korean regime turned him or what they did to him to make him appear in North Korea in a press conference event, but according to his statement, no doubt prepared by the regime, I was accused of sending him to North Korea with homemade bombs made from thermos bottles, and that he was given this mission by me. This accusation is still being repeatedly made by the regime, to this day, accusing me of this.
It’s a bit embarrassing for me to tell all of you this, but according to the North Korean regime, ‘behind Kim Seong Min are the South Korean N.I.S. (National Intelligence Service) bastards, and in the United States, Suzanne Scholte is behind him in this’; the regime actually said that ‘American bastards are behind this.’ [Laughter]

To be honest with all the Americans present in this room today, I am not someone that would need a mission order from Suzanne to destroy a statue of Kim Il Sung – if I really wanted to blow up the statue I’d go there myself and do it myself, not be asked or ordered by someone to do it.

[Laughter]

Through this recent experience I felt once again how much the North Korean regime will lie and make up stories – the lengths to which they will go to spread lies and rumors, and how through actions like this the regime is intimidating and blackmailing the world.

The regime has released more than twenty threatening press releases and official announcements attacking and criticizing Free North Korea Radio, saying we should be shut down and closed down. The pro-North Korea leftists who are undoubtedly controlled by the regime have been sent in the past, to protest and demonstrate in front of our radio station, calling for us to shut down our broadcasts; we’ve also been mailed a threatening package of a blood-stained axe. However, we do not pay any attention to these kinds of threats, none at all. Even when the regime says that they will chase us to the ends of the earth to kill us, even if Kim Jong Il’s son, Kim Jong Un, chases us to find and kill us, no matter what kind of threats come our way, I will continue to raise high the banner of freedom and democracy, and along with my true comrades, will diligently continue to broadcast into North Korea until the day that the Kim Jong Un regime is destroyed and the peninsula is reunified. Until that happens, please continue to support and show interest in the work we do through Free North Korea Radio, and please continue to love us. Thank you, Suzanne.

[Applause]

SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Since you brought up the statue, I feel like I have to make a comment about that. If you go on the pro-North Korean website, the picture where they’re implicating us for being behind the statue is actually a picture from North Korea Freedom Week 2009 when we were visiting Ambassador Chris Hill at the State Department. So, the photo where they’re implicating me, is a photo from a visit to the State Department which Ambassador Chris Hill hosted, so it’s very strange... I kind of speculated, why would they be making this up? That there was some plot to blow up the statues? And I was wondering if they’re trying to get ahead of a situation where there may be North Koreans who are disgruntled, that do put graffiti on statues or do try to deface the statues, and perhaps they’re trying to get ahead of it and say ‘oh, see we told you, it’s Kim Seong Min and the N.I.S. and the American imperialist whatever’. And if that does in fact happen, because there are people that are becoming so disgruntled and disenchanted in North Korea.

Our next speaker is Pack Kwang Il, who is the Representative of the Youth and Students Forum for North Korean Democratization. He is unique in the sense that he was a North Korean teacher, and was from the elites in North Korean society; he is a graduate of Kim Hyong Jik Teacher’s University, which I understand is named for the grandfather of Kim Il Sung, so a very prestigious teacher’s college in Pyongyang. He taught in North Korea, but he defected because it was discovered that he had distributed a South Korean drama called ‘Sand clock’ [Hourglass]. Those of you who have been following North Korea know that the regime has not been able to block out the information from the outside world. South Korean dramas are very popular as well as western films, which have become very popular in North Korea. So he was caught distributing a South Korean drama, so he defected because he knew he was going to be arrested. But, he was caught in China, just like Kim Seong Min, repatriated to North Korea, tortured, sent to a security prison in North Hamkyoung Province, and was going to be transferred to a political prison camp. He also was able to escape again,
where he was rescued by a pastor in China, when he fled again to cross the border. When he came to
South Korea, he became very involved with the North Korean human rights movement there, served
as the head of the newspaper ‘Justice’, and now he’s leading efforts among the young people in South
Korea and especially got involved with the promotion for the film, 48M, which Kim Seong Min talked
about which will be premiering here on Wednesday. So, Pack Kwang Il. [Applause]

[Translated from Korean:]

PACK KWANG IL: Suzanne did such a wonderful introduction of me, so I thank you for that.
Director Kim Seong Min before me spoke about the Kim Jong Un regime, the power structure,
changes in the regime since Kim Jong Un came to power, and future forecasts, and he did a great job
of addressing these topics. I will talk briefly about how even in the Kim Jong Un regime era, the
North Korean human rights problem will continue.

As all of you know very well, the world’s worst human rights situation right now is going on in
North Korea. If there is a place in this world that has the worst human rights system, that system
would be in North Korea. The place where human beings have to give up their right to live like human
beings, that place is North Korea. North Korea is a place where they will kill you for believing in God;
where they will kill you if you ask for food because you are starving; where they will kill you for
leaving your homeland to seek freedom for your life in going to China, or South Korea, or America.
For working hard to solve this North Korean human rights situation, I want to extend my deepest
appreciation and thanks to President Suzanne Scholte of the Defense Forum Foundation, and to the
people of America, and to all of you gathered here this afternoon.

Dear distinguished guests, we see happening in North Korea today, something we have never
seen happen before, which is the third generation succession that has happened in the country. This
of course is the three generations of feudalistic, dictatorial regime that has been handed down from
Kim Il Sung to Kim Jong Il, to now Kim Jong Un. This is a 21st century feudalistic dynasty, whereby
because the people were unfortunate in having a bad ruler, the citizens have starved to death, died
from diseases and sickness, are incarcerated in political prison camps, tortured and mistreated to
death; a system where tens of thousands of people die every year – this unique system is one that we
see only in North Korea. In only three years, three million people died from the famine, and despite
this happening, the rulers have no guilty conscience and go right ahead with the third generation
succession – this is North Korea.

There is no life in North Korea. There is no love in North Korea. Where there is no life and no
love, where there is not even a basic human right, there are 22 million people who are at the
crossroads of life and death. They are thrashing about today in order to seek their basic freedom and
rights. That is why today they are crossing the Yalu River and the Tumen River, risking their lives to
escape North Korea. However, the escape from North Korea for freedom and life is not an easy road.
For human beings, human rights and life are directly connected and related to one another. That is,
human rights is an issue of life. For us humans, life is a precious gift from God. However, if there is a
force that will mercilessly and cruelly step on God’s precious gift of life, that force is the Kim Jong Un
regime of North Korea.

I wonder if the young leader Kim Jong Un, who is in his late twenties, if he has a conscience?
When you ask a lot of the North Korean defectors this question, they all answer, ‘NO’. Why is this?
All of you distinguished guests here, why do you think that is so? It is because someone who has
never been hungry, will never know what hunger is. Those who never shivered through a cold, will
never know what it’s like to be cold.
Those who were never tortured will never understand the pain and suffering of torture. It is the same thing. Kim Jong Un, from the moment he was born, enjoyed wealth and prosperity – how can he understand the suffering of the North Korean people?

I am here in America to share an important message with all of you all today. I want to talk a little bit more about the film 48M, which was financed and made with funds collected by North Korean defector elites, who in the early 1990s came to South Korea in search of freedom and human rights, who donated their own time and money, and during the course of three years, brought the vision of this film to reality by producing and making this film.

As Mr. Kim Seong Min previously mentioned, the movie 48M, which we’re about to hold a screening of here in DC, this movie shows the reality of the North Korean human rights situation on the movie screen.

The film 48M is a human rights film that vividly shows the North Korean human rights situation as depicted in the border between China and North Korea, in the Yalu River, and at the shortest distance in the river – the distance of only 48 meters. This movie, which I would like to point out again will have its screening on Capitol Hill very soon, was made by conducting interviews of over 200 North Korean defectors during a three year period. In the film the lives of seven North Korean families in the city of Hyesan in Ryanggang Province, near the border area are depicted, showing why these people had no choice but to defect.

The daughter who attempts to escape to try to help her father’s illness... A father who takes poison and chooses death in order to save his own children... A young boy who sells his baby sister in the market for a paltry sum of 100 Won so that he can end up saving her... A mother and daughter who risk their lives to escape North Korea... A father who wants to honor the memory of his young son who died of starvation, by trying to seek a better life... A woman who is beaten and killed by North Korean security agents for having become a Christian and believing in Jesus... The North Korean soldiers, victims of the regime, who kill the people that are trying to cross the short distance of 48 meters.... These heartbreaking stories, and more, are what are shown in 48M.

Dear Distinguished guests – who in this world would want to leave their hometown where they were born? A place where their ancestors are buried, but where they have no choice but to leave; even today where the Kim Jong Un regime is in power, countless number of people are still leaving their hometowns in North Korea.

It is a dangerous gamble for them to go on this road that can lead to life, as they escape from North Korea. And all those people are all pleading earnestly to all of you here this afternoon.

As long as the Kim Jong Un regime continues, the human rights violations and the worsening of the human rights situation will continue in North Korea.

The Kim Jong Un regime, which does not respect other human beings as human beings, will be judged by history and by God.

And they are pleading all this on behalf of the 23 million North Korean citizens, that we will hold the North Korean regime in judgment.

And they are pleading with you today –

Please find freedom for the North Korean people;
Please find freedom for the countless number of North Korean refugees who are in China, who are being arrested and being forcibly repatriated to North Korea;

I sincerely request your support and help until the day the Kim Jong Un regime collapses and the true spring of peace comes to the land of North Korea.

Once again, thank you very much.

[Applause]

SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Before we conclude, we can take a couple of questions, and I would ask that it’d be from the Congressional staff. I know we have members of the media here, but you guys are welcome to talk with them afterwards, but if there’s any Congressional staff that want to ask any questions of either Kim Seong Min or Pack Kwang Il, if you want to just ask any questions... Yes ma’am.

QUESTION: Dena Kozanas with Congresswoman Candice Miller’s office, it’s good to see you both again, I know we’ve worked together in the past. You’re in a room full of Congressional staff, so my question to you is what message do we take back to our bosses? What can we do – what can the U.S. Congress can do to help the North Koreans, and to help with peace and stability in the Korean peninsula. Thank you.

KIM SEONG MIN: The following message is what I would like for you to relay back to your bosses. In my talk just now, I mentioned, ‘two to three years’, and in North Korean society now, with regards to this Kim Jong Un regime, if South Korea and the international community does not pay attention and does not correctly deal with North Korea, there is talk that this regime will go longer than the regime of Kim Jong Il. Therefore, for two to three years, we must really focus, and make North Korea follow international norms or just cause them to collapse – that’s the basic message I have that I would like for all of you to take back to your bosses.

QUESTION: Hi, David Davis with Senator Hutchinson’s office. Kim Jong Il was not receptive whatsoever to the efforts by the Chinese to sort of open up and do things their way. I’m sure, I know, the Chinese are doing everything they can to try to influence Kim Jong Un to adopt some of their reforms. What do you think, is there a chance? Are there are any efforts going on there? What do you see the likelihood of that happening?

KIM SEONG MIN: China has always thought of North Korea from the viewpoint of how they will look in the eyes of the international community. They have never thought of really helping the Kim Jong Un regime – that is the way we look at it. Also, the late Hwang Jang Yop always said that Kim Jong Il always regarded China with hostility, but on the outside said, ‘We are close with China’.

Even now, China is just concerned with their position geopolitically in the world with how they are viewed in relation to North Korea, that is – they want to project an image that ‘only we can move the North Koreans’; this is what they think and this is the role they want to play. However, when we look at Chinese blogs, web portal sites, and other online forums, and these things are not reported widely in the media, but we see that the Chinese citizens, the Chinese people – the ones who are seeking democracy – they are saying, ‘why do we need to continue helping and supporting this headache that is North Korea?’, and this voice of complaint is continuing to grow in China. The one thing that the Chinese regime fears the most is the people’s hearts turning away from the government; this shift in public opinion is the one that the Chinese government fears the most, and therefore if this continues, the Chinese government, in due time, while they may not completely turn their backs on the Kim Jong Un regime, they might make fundamental demands and request things on principle.
If I may say one more thing, Kim Jong Il, when he visited China, the Chinese officials blocked off roads and gave him a so-called Chinese welcome and reception. Regarding this, the Chinese netizens took to the on-line world and reacted very, very harshly. We cannot ignore these sorts of reactions of the Chinese people, and the relationship between China and North Korea, in order to draw out the fundamental position of China regarding North Korea – how can we attempt to correct the wrongdoings of China? – However, I think it is very important for us to continue to move the hearts and minds of the people of China.

SUZANNE SCHOLTE: We'll take one more question.

QUESTION: Hi, Spenser Bomholt from Congressman Joe Crowley’s office. I was wondering what you guys think we could do diplomatically to help engage North Korea to aid in the humanitarian issues that are going on there? Is there something we can do to really help progress and really help the citizens of North Korea?

KIM SEONG MIN: I think that’s a really big question, but if I can answer this as a North Korean defector, the American government has taken a lot of actions against North Korea, the way I see it. Through military posture, the American government is showing that they are a force to reckon with, economically, they have put in sanctions and isolated the North Korean regime, and also, always bringing up the human rights issue with the North Korean regime.

The most important thing however is international standards, or international principles. The American government, we have seen in the past, and I’m talking as a North Korean defector - will disregard these important, international principles even if it’s right in front of them, when North Korea says they will get rid of nuclear weapons or give up the pursuit of nuclear weapons, and the American government ends up saying basically, ‘we’ll talk, we’ll make a peace treaty, when you give up your nuclear ambitions’. I think this is very dangerous, and this is a seriously dangerous action towards the dictatorial regime that can only bring forth serious, dangerous misjudgment.

When I met President Bush many years ago, he asked me what I would do if I were President. At that time I got nervous and could not answer as I wanted to [Laughter]; but if I were asked the same question now, I would say that I would deal with a North Korea that possesses nuclear weapons in a decisive, sure manner – I would just stomp and crush them to smithereens, that’s how I would answer that question.

The reason why North Korea keeps on using the nuclear card is because they are trying to negotiate with and engage in dialogue with the United States. There is a principle that the United States applies when dealing with countries like Iraq, or some other nations in the Middle East, such as, we will not tolerate WMDs. But, with North Korea, I don’t know why the same principle is not applied now to dealing with North Korea and the U.S. is basically tolerating WMDs in North Korea.

SUZANNE SCHOLTE: Well, thank you very much. I just want to introduce Richard Lee, he came all the way from Beverly Hills, California, to help with the promotion of 48M, so if you could just stand, Richard. Thank you so much for joining us. He was going to make an announcement for 48M, but I know the defectors covered it very well. Please take the flyers with you that have information for the screening, that’s on Wednesday at six o’clock. And the information to RSVP is there, it’s going to be in the Rayburn Building, in the Committee Room, so it’s going to be pretty tight seating, so please RSVP for that. The defectors will be here all week; we have a hearing on Wednesday morning that Congressman Frank Wolf and Congressman James McGovern are hosting of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. If anyone is interested in having a meeting with them while they’re here, they’re going to be on the Hill a lot of the time on Thursday. Thank you very much for coming, and for being
so attentive, for your care and concern about the people of North Korea. I deeply appreciate all of you being here. Kahm-sa-ham-nida! [Thank you.] 

[END]