



**TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF
U.S. PERSONNEL ACCOUNTING OPERATIONS IN
NORTH KOREA**

(Response to Query Only)

May 26, 2005

QUESTION: Why are you temporarily suspending joint recovery operations in to North Korea?

ANSWER: The conditions in North Korea are not conducive to the safety of American personnel executing these missions, and therefore we have decided to temporarily suspend remains recovery operations in North Korea.

This is unique U.S. government mission, and taken in overall context, the environment in North Korea raises some serious concerns with regard to safety of the U.S. personnel we put on the ground. We are prepared to return the missions after North Korea has created an appropriate environment.

QUESTION: Who authorized this pause and when does it take affect?

ANSWER: On Tuesday, May 24, 2005, the Department of Defense (DoD) recommended – and the U.S. Government approved – the temporary suspension of joint remains recovery missions in North Korea. The conditions in North Korea are not conducive to the continued presence of American personnel in North Korea.

QUESTION: What about the recovery of remains in North Korea? When will it resume?

ANSWER: The U.S. is prepared to return to North Korea once the appropriate environment is set by North Korea. Since 1996 DoD has conducted 33 remains recovery operations in North Korea, recovering more than 200 sets of remains we believe to be those of unaccounted-for Americans. Remains that our joint teams recovered during the first operation of 2005 have been repatriated and are currently en route for examination

by the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawaii for proper identification. All remains we have excavated, which we believe to be the remains of U.S. personnel, are in American hands. DoD is committed to keeping its promise to those who serve in defense of this great nation to bring them home, honor their sacrifices and keep faith with their fellow warriors and families.

QUESTION: How are Korean War U.S. servicemember families reacting to this news?

ANSWER: We fully expect them to be concerned. After all, their loved ones have been missing for over 50 years and it's been only recently that they have begun to receive answers to their long-standing questions. However, we are also certain that they share our commitment to assure the safety of the men and women who participate in this humanitarian mission today. DoD is committed to keeping its promise to those who serve in defense of this great nation to bring them home, honor their sacrifices and keep faith with their fellow warriors and families.

QUESTION: When was the latest mission to North Korea completed?

ANSWER: A Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command team recently returned from North Korea on Tuesday, May 24. DoD is committed to the expeditious recovery of missing U.S. servicemen and the repatriation of all U.S. remains from overseas conflicts

QUESTION: When was the next team scheduled to go to North Korea?

ANSWER: The next team was scheduled to go to North Korea on Saturday, May 28th. DoD is committed to keeping its promise to those who serve in defense of this great nation to bring them home, honor their sacrifices and keep faith with their fellow warriors and families.

We are prepared to return to the missions once North Korea sets the appropriate environment.

QUESTION: What kind of atmosphere exists in North Korea?

ANSWER: The conditions in North Korea are not conducive to the safety of American personnel performing these missions, and therefore we have decided to temporarily suspend remains recovery operations in North Korea.

This is unique U.S. government mission, and taken in overall context, the environment in North Korea raises some serious concerns with regard to safety of the U.S. personnel we put on the ground.

QUESTION: How did you assess this atmosphere to prohibit the safe completion of the remains recovery mission?

ANSWER: The conditions in North Korea are not conducive to the safety of American personnel performing these missions, and therefore we have decided to temporarily suspend remains recovery operations in North Korea.

This is unique U.S. government mission, and taken in overall context, the environment in North Korea raises some serious concerns with regard to safety of the U.S. personnel we put on the ground.

QUESTION: Is this in any relation to rumored North Korea nuclear weapons test?

ANSWER: No. The conditions in North Korea are not conducive to the effective operation of these missions, and therefore we have decided to temporarily suspend remains recovery operations in North Korea.

QUESTION: Does this reflect a change of posture by the U.S. towards North Korea?

ANSWER: No.

The conditions in North Korea are not conducive to the effective operation of these missions, and therefore we have decided to temporarily suspend remains recovery operations in North Korea.

We are prepared to return to the missions once North Korea sets the appropriate environment.

QUESTION: Is the U.S. planning any offensive military action against North Korea?

ANSWER: The President and other senior U.S. government officials have repeatedly stated that the U.S. harbors no intent to attack or invade the DPRK.

That said, the U.S. government, across the political and military spectrum, continues to follow closely all information coming out of, or regarding, North Korea and its nuclear activities. U.S. forces stationed in South Korea and around the region maintain a very high-level of combat readiness in a defensive posture, and are prepared to respond to any contingency as required.

QUESTION: What's the current status of the 6-Party Talks?

ANSWER: We refer you to the State Department for that answer, but we remain committed to the 6-Party Talks diplomatic process.

QUESTION: Were the North Koreans advised of the suspension? When and how? What was their reaction?

ANSWER: We advised the North Koreans through their offices at the United Nations on May 25th. They have not responded to our message.

QUESTION: Have we advised our allies and other nations of the 6-Party Talks? When and how? What was their reaction?

ANSWER: We have advised the other 4 members of the 6-Party Talks and our treaty allies and friends in the region and remain in

close consultation with them about the North Korea nuclear issue. All the other members of the 6-Party Talks also agree that for North Korea to end its international isolation – to realize the full benefits of trade, aid and investment – it must first dismantle its nuclear programs in a transparent manner subject to effective verification.

Source:

NSC (Hadley); SECDEF; SECSTATE; CJCS;
DUSD Asia and Pacific Affairs; DUSD Asia
Pacific (Korea Policy); JCS J5; ASD (PA);
DPMO

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