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Richard Boucher, Department of State Spokesman

Press Briefing at Koryo Hotel

October 23, 2000, Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea

As released by the Office of the Spokesman

U.S. Department of State

MR. BOUCHER: I thought I'd give you an update just to run through the day's activities and tell you what we expect tomorrow to the extent we know. This morning the Secretary started at about 10:30 with a courtesy call on Vice Chairman Jo. That took place at the Kim Il Sung Mausoleum. They had a meeting of about 20-30 minutes. It was a courtesy call. Vice Chairman Jo welcomed her. They talked about his visit to Washington; the importance of the joint communique we issued in Washington. He promised every effort to make the visit a success. The Secretary for her part thanked him for the hospitality that's been shown to her and said there's a lot to do to make this visit successful and to ensure that any possible visit by the President would be successful as well. Then Vice Marshal Jo walked her through the Mausoleum and up to the place where Kim Il Sung's body is lying. The Secretary stopped there for a brief, silent moment and then they proceeded on.

She then went to the World Food Program distribution site, the Kindergarten, where I think your pool was there, or many of you might have been there. You have her remarks. She participated in the performance there and saw the distribution of commodities that are brought in under the World Food Program, including a lot of those commodities being American donations.

This afternoon the Secretary met with Chairman Kim Jong Il for about three hours with one short break of about 15 minutes. They started shortly after three o'clock. They finished shortly after six o'clock. The break was just before five. The conversations were substantive. We found them very useful. She described Chairman Kim Jong Il as very engaged in the conversations. After a brief break they went to the performance which you all witnessed. They've gone back to the guesthouses where they will have dinner tonight, and they expect to meet again tomorrow. That's about all we have for you at this stage by way of an update. I think you all know the Secretary expects to have a press conference tomorrow, and you can have more information then.

QUESTION: Can you say whether they discussed missiles or terrorism?

MR. BOUCHER: I can't really. They discussed the issues that are of concern to us.

QUESTION: Can you tell us who was in the meeting?

MR. BOUCHER: The meetings with Kim Jong Il were relatively small after the first introduction of the team. There was the Secretary plus four and an interpreter. On our side the

four were Ambassador Sherman, Assistant Secretary Roth, Jack Pritchard of the National Security Council and Chuck Kartman, Amb. Kartman.

QUESTION: Why is there going to be a meeting tomorrow? That certainly wasn't expected in the first place. Was it decided that they hadn't covered enough ground tonight, or did they just enjoy each other's company so much that they decided they want to see each other again?

MR. BOUCHER: I wouldn't use either of the descriptions. I'd just say they decided to continue their discussions tomorrow. So they're meeting again tomorrow.

QUESTION: Why?

MR. BOUCHER: Because they have more things to talk about.

QUESTION: So they didn't finish today?

MR. BOUCHER: They have more things to talk about. They haven't finished their discussions.

QUESTION: Did she cover all the issues?

MR. BOUCHER: I'm not going to try to define issue by issue. I'd just say they had substantive and useful discussions today, and they'll continue their discussions tomorrow. They have more to talk about.

QUESTION: Can you give us a sense of what it was like in the room? Was it serious, humorous? Any little color or feeling what it was like?

MR. BOUCHER: I already tried by saying she found the Chairman very engaged. It was a substantive discussion and one in which both sides were very engaged.

QUESTION: Do you know what time frame they are going to talk tomorrow? Morning?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't have a time for tomorrow morning.

QUESTION: Does the Secretary plan to talk to President Clinton after this meeting before she goes to bed tonight?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't know.

QUESTION: When did the North Koreans give notice to you of the Secretary's meeting today with Kim Jong Il?

MR. BOUCHER: Notified us? They notified us shortly after the courtesy call before we went to the World Food Program that we'd be changing the events on our agenda this afternoon and having a meeting with Chairman Kim instead.

QUESTION: Who was there with Kim?

MR. BOUCHER: Vice Foreign Minister Kang was there, and I don't know who the others were.

QUESTION: How many were there?

MR. BOUCHER: There was Chairman Kim plus three and an interpreter on his side, at least initially.

QUESTION: Would you say a visit by the President is more likely as a result of today's talks?

MR. BOUCHER: I wouldn't try to characterize it. I'd characterize it the same way we did in Washington.

QUESTION: At what point did she know she was going to the performance, and did you speak with her about it afterwards?

MR. BOUCHER: In the first part of the meeting, so in that first two hours, when they came out for the break at about 4:45, they notified us of the new schedule. At that point she had been invited to attend the performance this evening. I spoke to her very briefly afterwards. The only thing she said was "amazing," was the way she described it.

QUESTION: Did he go with her? What were the logistics? Did he escort her there? The same car?

MR. BOUCHER: No. We went by separate motorcade, and he was there when we arrived.

QUESTION: Can you tell us anything about personal conversation they had today at their meeting before they got into the substantive stuff - chit chat sort of thing?

MR. BOUCHER: Only to the extent that I think your pool heard some of it as they were walking down the corridor, and they probably heard more than I did.

QUESTION: She said amazing about the whole meeting?

MR. BOUCHER: No, about the performance, the performance.

QUESTION: Did you hear anything about, apparently the chatting during the demonstration, did she explain what was said?

MR. BOUCHER: No, she didn't. I looked over a couple of times and didn't see them chatting.

QUESTION: I saw them chatting a couple of times.

MR. BOUCHER: You saw chatting, ok. No, we didn't talk about that.

QUESTION: Did she say "amazing" like, "wow, that was amazing," or more like, "amazing, I can't believe this." (laughter)

QUESTION: We're grasping here. We need a story.

QUESTION: We're trying to grasp her tone of voice.

MR. BOUCHER: Well, I'm trying to give you a little bit, but I can't characterize the "amazing."

QUESTION: Did she shake her head while saying that.

MR. BOUCHER: I'll just leave it at what she said.

QUESTION: Did she know beforehand that it was an event that had been designed to celebrate the 55th anniversary of the founding of the North Korean communist party?

MR. BOUCHER: It had been described to us that way, yes.

QUESTION: Did you have an option of saying, "Thank you very much; we appreciate your

invitation, but no thanks?"

MR. BOUCHER: No.

QUESTION: Why not?

MR. BOUCHER: It was put on as part of the program. She was invited to attend as part of her visit here.

QUESTION: Was the Secretary surprised at today's sudden change of schedule.

MR. BOUCHER: We had expected to see Chairman Kim during the visit. We knew we were going to do that. There were other events on the schedule. But I guess we always knew it was possible that he might want to meet the first day, and that's the way it turned out. So it was a change in the schedule, but not totally surprising.

QUESTION: Do you think it would be fair to say that's a good sign, that he wanted to bring forward the talks at an early stage?

MR. BOUCHER: I'll leave it to other analysts to analyze. I really don't want to get beyond sort of -

QUESTION: We don't have access to them though.

MR. BOUCHER: I know, but I just don't want to get beyond sort of describing what happened today, and I'm not going to try to characterize it.

QUESTION: What did you think of the militaristic elements in the mass performance?

MR. BOUCHER: I didn't have a chance to talk to the Secretary.

QUESTION: No, no. What did *you* think?

MR. BOUCHER: That doesn't matter. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Has she made any personal comments about the speed this has all happened, about the fact that she's actually here?

MR. BOUCHER: Not that I can recall. I mean, we are quite aware that this is the first time that a senior United States official has met - I think perhaps any United States official - has met with Chairman Kim Jong Il in his current capacity. We're certainly quite aware that the visit is historic, but also aware that there are a lot of things that have to be discussed, there are a lot of issues that have to be dealt with. And we want to continue the process of improving the relationship.

I think there's one more thing I didn't mention in there, that she did give Chairman Kim a letter from President Clinton. Generally, this is what the letter dealt with. (It) was the expectation of further developing relations between the United States and North Korea.

QUESTION: Whose expectations?

MR. BOUCHER: The President's expectations of how to further develop relations between the United States -

QUESTION: Of how to?

MR. BOUCHER: Yes. How to.

QUESTION: Did he give them thresholds or (inaudible)?

MR. BOUCHER: No, again, that's about as much as I can say about the letter.

QUESTION: Is she tired?

MR. BOUCHER: She's a --

QUESTION: A trouper.

MR. BOUCHER: She's a trouper. She keeps working. She's had a nap, too, today.

QUESTION: Would it be fair to say they were discussing the conditions for a presidential visit today?

MR. BOUCHER: I would describe it more as, they were describing the issues that are of concern to the United States. Being able to deal successfully with these issues is key to having a successful visit by the President.

QUESTION: Could that include human rights issues?

MR. BOUCHER: Again, I'm not getting into specific ones.

QUESTION: Say again?

MR. BOUCHER: She's discussing the issues of concern to the United States. Being able to deal successfully with these issues is the key to being able to have a successful visit by the President.

QUESTION: What's the main objective of this visit? I've heard someone talk about trying to gauge what you heard in Washington, about whether it's true or whether it's sincere, or something about that.

MR. BOUCHER: I don't think we've tried to characterize that way. We've described it as a visit to discuss the issues of concern and in preparation of a possible visit by the President.

QUESTION: At the mausoleum, is Kim's body on display there?

MR. BOUCHER: Yes.

QUESTION: Is it buried?

MR. BOUCHER: No. His body's on display.

QUESTION: Can you see it, walk up to it?

MR. BOUCHER: Yes. You walk into a room. It's a fairly large room. It's kind of reddish-light marble all around. A spotlight on the body.

QUESTION: Did she sign the book there? There's a book, I guess, where you can -

MR. BOUCHER: Not that I saw.

QUESTION: Did she bow her head?

MR. BOUCHER: Sort of respectfully stopped silently for a moment, I'd say.

QUESTION: Was he dressed in military uniform?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't think so. I don't remember exactly.

QUESTION: Did she have any reticence about going there? More than 30,000 Americans died in the Korean War.

MR. BOUCHER: She's quite aware of the history. We are quite aware of the history. At the same time, she's on a visit. Part of a visit is to understand what's important to your hosts, and I think it was in that regard that she went.

QUESTION: You sounded like both of them expected that the President is going to visit North Korea. What they're trying to do now is to make it successful. Is that your characterization?

MR. BOUCHER: I don't think I've changed our characterization of it. It's always been viewed in preparation of a possible visit by the President, and clearly that depends on how things go on the issues.

All right. We'll stop with that.

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