

**CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE**

**POLICY OPTION FOR THE NORTH  
KOREA'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM**

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## *Transcript Not Checked Against Delivery*

KARIN LEE: Can we take our seats, please? (Cross talk.) Hello. Thank you all for coming today. My name is Karin Lee and I'm the executive director of the National Committee on North Korea and I get to have the pleasurable task of welcoming you all and thanking you all for coming and thanking our two esteemed guests for coming as well.

When Sharon got in touch with me a couple of weeks ago and said don't you think it's time for a program on – (chuckles) – North Korea, and I thought, hmm, the Carnegie Endowment's calling me on the National Committee on North Korea, but what a good idea. And I think the turnout that we have today – we still have some more people coming in – is a testament not only to the expertise of our speakers, which is undeniable, but also to the readiness of the policy community here in Washington to have a conversation that goes a little bit beyond the analysis that we've been reading in the papers so far.

I'd like to thank, in addition to thanking our speakers, thank the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Sharon will be the moderator for our program today. She's the senior associate in nonproliferation here at Carnegie and has been working on nonproliferation for many years, nine years with the U.S. government, her last position there as director of policy coordination in the Nonproliferation Bureau and directly before the Carnegie Endowment, for Congressional Research Service, where she was responsible for RS-21391 – (laughter) – which was, of course, the report on North Korea's nuclear weapons program latest developments. So it's very appropriate that she will be moderating this afternoon.

I guess I'll just turn the program over to Sharon now, with an additional thank you to all of you and to our speakers and to add that if the National Committee on North Korea's unknown to you, I hope you'll pick up a brochure about our organization downstairs.

SHARON SQUASSONI: Thank you, Karin. Thank you all for coming. I'm very excited to host this discussion between Bob Galluci and Carl Ford and the rest of our experts in this audience. I want to keep my remarks really short because we have two terrific experts and we want to leave plenty of time for questions.

So just a few administrative notes. First, we are on the record. We will start with brief remarks first from Carl Ford and then Bob Galluci and then go to the Q&A session. Can I urge you all to turn your cell phones off right now? And there are several handouts on the publications table. If, for some reason, you didn't get them, they are all available both at Karin's website, which is –

MS. LEE: [www.ncnk.org](http://www.ncnk.org).

MS. SQUASSONI: – and also at the Carnegie Endowment website.

Carl Ford is the president of Ford & Associates. He specializes in international policy intelligence analysis and defense issues, with a particular focus on East Asia and the Middle East. You've done a lot of things, both – (chuckles) – in the U.S. Army and the intelligence community and executive positions in the State Department. Lastly, he was assistant secretary of State for intelligence and research and he teaches both at Georgetown University, at the School of Foreign Service, and also at George Mason University. So, Carl, will you take it away?

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CARL FORD: Well, thank you very much. I was very confident about what I was going to say today until I got here and saw this bottle of Mountain Valley Spring Water. I don't know if anybody knows the history of this water, but it's the water of the Senate for one thing. (Laughter.) It also is the spring, where this water comes from, is on 40 acres that my great-great-grandfather homesteaded but then sold for a song before he realized that you could sell billions of bottles of this to Yankees. (Laughter.) And so every time I see this, I think of all the things that could have been but weren't because of my great-great-grandfather's ability to predict the future was about as good as mine is in the intelligence community. (Laughter.)

My involvement with North Korea goes back 30 years, the Carter administration. And it was a time when the intelligence community all of a sudden discovered that they had undercounted the North Korean military by a third. Even today, 30 years later, the notion of missing 33-1/3 percent amazes me, that we could have been that wrong. So certainly it wasn't a very auspicious beginning in terms of focusing on Korea.

And I wish I could say that in the ensuing decades the I.C., or my colleagues in the policy community, had learned from all of our mistakes, but that doesn't seem really to be the case. (Chuckles.) And, in fact, the only thing that I can say for certain about our North Korean policy is that it hasn't worked. The pragmatists have had a shot at it. The hardheads have had a shot at it. The softies, everybody, has failed, failure being defined as they got nuclear weapons.

And for much of the last 30 years, one of our prime objectives was to try to stop the proliferation of nuclear weapons to North Korea. So however you want to look at it, that doesn't seem like very much of a success, on my part. In fact, probably the worst moment for me was after we had drawn a bright red line in the sand and huffed and puffed about North Korea not testing a nuclear weapon, we have been hemming and hawing and trying to redefine what we really meant by that ever since they tested.

So that now when we talk about proliferation in North Korea, we really aren't talking about stopping them from having nuclear weapons. We don't always admit it to ourselves, but when we talk about proliferation, we're talking about we don't want them to transfer their weapon or their technology to other people. That's certainly at least a step or two back from what most of us had hoped for during that time.

Now, a lot of you, because you are Korean experts, are going to be called on by the next administration to give advice and counsel on how to deal with this particular problem. And all I can say is good luck. It's one of those cases where only your enemy would wish on you the responsibility for dealing with North Korea over the next several years. It's going to be a thankless task, I'm afraid.

And the only advice I can give you is don't be afraid to try new things. Don't be wedded to the old ideas and the approaches that we all have tried in the past. They haven't worked. And to continue to beat our head against that wall seems to me not only dumb, but quite foolish of us. If it doesn't work, try something else. I mean, I've never been accused of being a brain. But even I get that, that if it doesn't work, stop doing it, try something new.

And the fact is, we may even need a brand new paradigm when we think about North Korea. I don't know. A lot of smarter people than me will have to deal with it, but clearly I

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wouldn't rule out anything in terms of looking at how we deal with this problem. And, in fact, there really is nothing to risk. The worst that could happen is that you will have the same success that we did. And so please, be open to new ideas and new ways of doing things.

Now, since this will probably be the last time anybody ever asks me to talk about North Korea or probably anything else, I couldn't resist at least putting down a few markers, thoughts that I think that we, as informed and interested people in this conundrum, ought to be focused on, ought to be thinking more about.

And the first of these, I think, is that we really have to come to terms with North Korea being a nuclear power. Now, I know we all understand that and we all give it lip service. But when I hear people talking about how we approach the next few years, it doesn't seem to get very much attention of how much that impacts how we do things, how does it affect U.S. interests, and that that has to be studied more carefully before we just sort of pretend at doing business as usual. Because I think – I can't say for sure, but it seems to me that makes a huge difference in how we should approach the problem.

A second one has to do with – I think it's been a terrible mistake to limit our channel to North Korea to one-to-one, to the State Department. I worked at State; I have great confidence in their negotiating power and their ability. They've got great people. But the fact is that in South Korea, in China, in Japan, in Taiwan, in Southeast Asia, one channel hasn't worked. It's been a coordination, collaboration between State, DOD, often CIA, and coordinated by the NSC. And that often times if you want to do business in any of these countries, if you don't have some in with the military or some in with the intelligence, the chances of moving forward in discussions is complicated. And in every country – it's not just my thinking, it actually is fact – that that works much better than trying for one group to do everything.

One, I just don't believe from what the experts tell me that the foreign ministry in North Korea really is all that – is the last word on anything and that if you ask people, well, what do the military think, well, we don't know, we don't have a clue. What do the intelligence types in North Korea think about this? Well, we don't know. The fact is we have been approached by the North Koreans to talk to those very people, the military and the intelligence people, and we were afraid. We thought they might misunderstand. It was important for only one voice.

So we missed the opportunity. Whether it happens regularly, I don't know. But I know it happened at least earlier in this administration. So that would be one of the things I would hope that the new administration would think about.

The other one, which is really near and dear to my heart, is verification and monitoring. Any agreement that we may or may not have with the North Koreans is going to depend a lot on those monitoring verification provisions. And I think that everyone I've talked to understands that for us to have any confidence at all, that the inspection and monitoring is going to have to be very intrusive. Even that may not be enough, but without intrusive inspections, more intrusive than we are used to in other parts of the world, that we will have many question marks about it.

Now, I'm quick to say that this is something that the more intrusive it is, the less the North Koreans are going to like it. Also, the more that we insist that we are the intrusive ones, the U.S.,

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the less likely the North Koreans are going to like it. So that the equation of intrusiveness and who's doing it, it seems to me, has to be faced early and head on and thought a lot about.

My thinking is that it's going to have – the last person that should be in charge of that is the U.S., that we won't get anywhere close to the sort of intrusive arrangement we need if we insist that we've got to see it for ourselves, rather than depend on the guy at IAEA or some other organization. We should be focusing on how intrusive it is, not who's doing it, because if we have to have one or the other, I would certainly pick, as an intelligence officer, more monitoring, more inspection, rather than care who actually did it.

I'm getting close to the end of my markers, by the way. One of the other ones is for us not to forget that North Korea is not only not the only problem in Asia, it's not even the most important, and that there are other strategic issues of the United States that we can't forget about, but seem to have been ignoring for the most part for the last several years.

Any time that you take an assistant secretary in State and make them the lead dog on a series of high-level negotiations like the six-party talks, it seems to me very difficult for anyone at State to argue that they've had plenty of time to deal with U.S.-China, U.S.-Japan, U.S.-Taiwan, U.S.-Southeast Asia. It just doesn't seem to me to be – it doesn't fit.

We're going to have to recognize that somehow we have to understand that it's not the volume of activity that we have with North Korea, but how – the idea of that initiative. And fewer initiatives, but with bigger ideas, may be a much better approach than trying to dig from the bottom up to the top. Every expert on Korea I've talked to in the last 30 years has told me that trying to work from the bottom-up to Kim Jong-il or before that Kim Il-sung was an impossible task, that the buck stopped at his office. There were difficulties trying to get the word up to him, that it often was shaded, or he didn't get exactly the same word. And certainly without his personal involvement, a decision couldn't be made. Well, with all due respect to assistant secretaries of State, they're not the people that are going to be able to talk to Kim Jong-il. It just won't happen.

So my last recommendation is to think bigger, but have fewer initiatives. And my examples of these is that – I know everybody's going to go, oh no, but I say outrageous things and that's why I occasionally get invited to this sort of thing – (laughter) – I think that the new administration, the president, the first thing the president does on Korea is to invite Kim to Camp David, not to negotiate, but simply to set down – and if he wants to wag his finger at him – you notice I show my bias about him – (laughter) – if he wants to wag his finger at him, if he wants to lay down the sort of dos and don'ts of a relationship with the United States, I really don't care.

But I do believe that unless the president of the United States looks at Kim Jong-il in the face and says this is coming from me and this is the way it's going to be, it's always going to get harder. And everybody says, well, you don't do that. Yes, we do. Great powers do that. We don't have to say, well, what will other people think? We simply do what great powers do. And that is that we try to solve problems rather than worry about all the little minor things, well, he will get some hope that he's in charge back at home, people will say, well, what about human rights? Well, the fact is that all of those approaches have failed. So don't give me that that's the wrong way to go. It may be, but let's find out. Let's don't just say, well, we can't do that. It just won't work. Try it.

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Now, the other thing is that I think we have to quit waiting for North Korea to do something. Even if they do something, most of us aren't going to believe them. We're not going to ever trust them. They haven't given us any reason to trust them. So if we base our approach to North Korea on that they've got to prove to us that we can trust them, forget it. It isn't going to happen. That's crazy. That's a foolish notion. It just won't be the basis of any sort of discussion or dialogue with North Korea. They don't trust us; we don't trust them. Get over it. Let's get on to the next set of issues.

And one of those was the president simply should talk to the Russians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the South Koreans, and say let's work together, let's build a goddamn railroad from Pusan to the Russian far eastern railroad. Let's just do it, right through Korea. And if they balk at it, convince them. The fact is that without those sorts of economic big ideas, we're going to still continue to have a Korea that can't even feed its own people. And waiting for them to catch up, waiting for them to reform economically, fool's game. Let's just simply do what we know would help. Let's go in there and do it.

The second part of that, and related, is that, well, we need – simply, those same countries need to simply rebuild the electric energy infrastructure. One of the reasons we always say why in the world do you want a nuclear reactor, particularly one that wasn't tied to the electric grid, was that it couldn't accept the power that a reactor could provide. The place is in shambles. And unless you start factory by factory, city by city, county by county, rebuilding that electrical infrastructure, we all are just simply spinning our wheels about changing anything in North Korea. That's something that has to be done. And North Korea won't do it, can't do it.

And so waiting for them to change, waiting for them to do these big ideas, is foolish. And we're just going to have to go without them and do what we think is the right thing to do, or at least try, rather than say, well, I don't know, that just isn't going to work. Try something. If it's not this idea, I don't care. I obviously have had a lot of bad ideas in my life. And I know that. But I do know that unless we try things differently than we have, you're going to fail, just like we did. And it's not in anybody's interest, certainly not U.S. interests, for that to happen.

Let's finally get smart and do some different things if we have to. And again, that's what great powers do. And I still believe despite Iraq, despite Iran, and despite the stumbles in North Korea that we are a great power. And the only difference is we've got to start acting like one. Thank you. (Applause.)

MS. SQUASSONI: Thank you, Carl for those thought-provoking ideas for the next administration. Bob Galluci is going to speak next. He is the dean of the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, served 21 years in the government, including as the deputy executive chairman of the U.N. Special Commission in Iraq and he was the lead negotiator for the 1994 agreed framework. Thank you, Bob.

ROBERT GALLUCI: Thanks very much. I need to share with you that I'm going to call an automatic at the line. I have a set of comments I'm going to make which, as I shared with some of you, I think are pretty boring. They are my attempt to do what I was asked to do, which is that the title, where are we now, and what are our options? But I'm jealous of Carl and what he did, so after I do the boring part, I'll try to do this really fast, I'm going to go to – what I've got are Carl Ford's

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10 points, eight of which I disagree with. (Laughter.) So I think this will be more fun, at least for me anyway. (Laughter.)

So first the part that's obligatory. Where are we? I actually, of course, don't know. Chris doesn't call, he doesn't write. So I'm an outsider looking in. But I'm going to tell you how it seems to me. You know, Carl said, let me say it, this is an audience filled with experts and I'm chastened by that, but that doesn't shut me up. So help me if I get these things wrong. This is how it looks to me about where we are.

It looks to me as though we have most recently gotten both North Korea reactor operating records, but also plutonium separation records to help us figure things out. I think there were three campaigns in the reprocessing records and one 18 years ago and then two from the last five years. So we've got some really good data to work with.

Second, that there has been substantial disablement – I'm not sure what else to call it – on the five megawatt research reactor, on the fuel fabrication facility, on the reprocessing facility. I think they are disabled. It was kind of a choppy process having to do with whether the North Koreans thought we were doing and our allies in the six-party talks were doing what we had to do. But essentially, substantial disablement of the key figures, facilities at Yongbyon.

Third, there's been a declaration of close to I think 40 kilograms of plutonium, not counting what they might have used up in a test and in the process of preparing for a test. So they've done a bunch of stuff, in short.

On our side, we have had at least one cultural event that I noticed, that we have also delivered with our allies a lot of heavy fuel oil. I don't know whether all 950 plus 50 thousand tons have been delivered, but I think so. And we are, if I understand correctly, preparing to take those steps that are necessary to take North Korea off the list of states that sponsor terrorism and to lift the sanctions that are applied under the Trading with the Enemy Act. So we're doing some stuff, too.

With respect to the remaining issues that were supposed to be dealt with in the first phase, never mind the second phase, that is to say, Syria and the enrichment equipment, there's an either truly elegant solution that's been hit upon or the sleaziest one anybody's ever heard, depending on your perspective, and it is one in which we express our concerns in some detail about enrichment equipment and assistance to the construction of the research reactor in Syria. And the North Koreans say something like they acknowledge U.S. conclusions and take serious note of U.S. concerns. I think that's the language from Singapore. So this is kind of my understanding of where we are right now, check the box, that's where I think we are.

What's left to do? Are we done now? Can we stop talking about North Korea? Well, not quite. For me, the overriding thing that we have to keep coming back to, and I keep coming back to, is not the stuff that for me had always been interesting and now becomes a lot less interesting. It is – everybody think this with me as I say it: North Korea essentially built a plutonium production reactor secretly in Syria. All right. Built a plutonium production reactor in Syria. That's really bad. That's worse than, for me, North Korea with nuclear weapons mated with ballistic missiles. This is, to me, the real game. It's kind of switched to me. That's the game. That has not been settled by we

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take note of their concerns. That is a huge undropped shoe and it needs to be dealt with. And this case doesn't satisfactorily (ph) resolve until that one is sorted out completely.

Okay, the other things, which I think you all know about, are we satisfied with the number 40 if that's the number with respect to kilograms of plutonium, would you rather have heard 50? And second, what is the plan for the disposition of whatever is the absolute number? I get lost in the deal of February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007, about when exactly the plutonium leaves North Korea and goes some place else. Even if we got the right number, if they keep it, it's not a good outcome.

Third, do we ever get to see the centrifuge stuff and see it destroyed? Fourth, what about the equipment that we know is necessary to build an implosion system? I mean, we know it because we've built implosion systems and because we've crawled all over the Iraqi program to build that implosion system, so we know a little bit about not only what we had to do, but what a country these days needs to do in order to produce an implosion system. So what about all that stuff? Do we get to see that? Do we get to see that destroyed?

Sorry for numbering things, but I teach undergraduates and if you don't number things, they don't take notes – (laughter) – and if you have a certain impish streak like me, as you're doing that, you skip a number and then see if they catch it. (Laughter.) Sixth – (laughter) – what happens to the spent fuel that's been produced? Does it get canned as we canned the spent fuel all those many years ago and eventually get shipped out? What are the arrangements for that?

Seventh, inspection regime, Carl mentioned this. Is there a role for the International Atomic Energy Agency? Is it the additional protocol? Is it a new protocol? Is it IAEA additional protocol plus? What is the NPT status of North Korea right now and in six months? I've missed these little details along the way and I'm curious about it.

On the other side, what are – you know, where are we going with inducements? I haven't heard about light-water reactors in a while, which is fine with me. I know I unfortunately developed a reputation as, you know, the light-water reactor advocate, but that was only as compared to, you know, losing the deal. If we can get the deal without light-water reactors, god bless you. But I wonder if we really can and I've been expecting that they're going to come back at some point.

What about these other things, the diplomatic relations, the treaty as opposed to the armistice, the assurances which they like to call non-aggression pact, but it sounds a little funny to our ear, what about negative assurances or whatever it is provides formal assurances. You may recall that in the agreed framework, we were supposed to have specially designed and prepared security assurances beyond the standard NPT assurance. We never got to do that. And they never asked us about it, presumably because we never fully implemented the framework.

I would observe that as you go down the list of things you do to perform that we do, and the other states do, to perform under the February 13<sup>th</sup> agreement, it gets harder. And it gets harder not only because there will be things out there, like the ballistic missile program which I don't think has been rolled up or I missed it or the forward deployment of their forces, which I don't think has been dealt with, but what about human rights issues? The democracy issue, the question of how they treat their own people? This is something that nuclear negotiators – and there's more than one in this room I'm looking at – were prepared to put aside, as I was, in the interests of solving the nuclear problem.

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But when you have a deal like this that is so robust and has so many political moving parts, it's going to be hard to deliver all that and look the other way over the political activities in North Korea. This all became clear right after we did the deal with North Korea – this is back in '94, somebody said, well, now let's do something cultural. And the North Koreans have this idea they'll bring a whole bunch of these, you know, 12-year-old girls who do this synchronized stuff of gymnastics or something to the United States. And I remember we sat around thinking, well, wouldn't that be nice?

And then a couple of us had this image after about 10 minutes of watching 12-year-olds perform absolutely perfectly, somebody in the United States of America is going to ask the question, well, how do they get them to learn that? And the next thing you're going to be thinking about as you're talking about the Stalinist society and you're seeing, quote, the fruits of it, so there are going to be lots of opportunities here for there to be a slip between cup and lip as I think you get down to the political issues that divide us, that we cannot manage in a regime where we're trying to move to normal relations.

Okay, that's some thoughts about where we are, some things that are ahead. Basically, the question that I thought that would be the central question today is should we allow incentives to the North Koreans to go forward that we have identified without solving those problems, the plutonium problem, the Syrian problem, the enrichment problem. That seems to be what people want to talk about.

I find this not a very interesting question, but I have not understood for a long time critiques of the agreed framework. Forgive me. (Laughter.) And I mean, because to me, life is filled with compared-to-whats, and if you can get the thing you're comparing it to to change dramatically so you don't have to do an agreed framework, you don't have to give them light-water reactors and you can just tell them to stop their nuclear program, I think it's terrific. But we didn't figure out how to do that. So this administration didn't like the idea of this negotiation with them and so they didn't do it for years. And the North Koreans separated more plutonium, built nuclear weapons. Okay, that's what they got. That was the alternative. I like a framework more than that. Sue me.

So when I'm asked this question about, you know, which by the way a lot of us have been who have been involved – who have been critics of this administration about failing to negotiate, we've been asked, how do you feel now over this sort of inadequate negotiation that Chris Hill has been leading. Well, it's inadequate compared to what? Compared to getting everything for nothing, it is certainly inadequate.

But if you ask me, what is it that we're getting? Excuse me, but I think we did substantial damage to their capacity to produce plutonium and separate plutonium last I looked. Could they undo it like they did last time when we just got a freeze? I'm sure. It will take them longer, but that's non-trivial. Because when we hadn't done that, they produced a lot more plutonium and they built a nuclear weapon or two or three. So I like this – what we've gotten them to do.

What is it that we're giving up that Les Gelb and Winston Lord are so unhappy about they've got to write about it in *The Washington Post*? What is it that we're – well, we're going to take them off these two lists. Boy, that's big. (Laughter.) I mean, gee, can you imagine – I mean, look at the damage to the national security if we don't count them on the list of countries that

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sponsor terrorism. What's going to happen then? Well, and then we take them off the list of countries that are subject to sanctions under a law passed in 1917? This is the big concession we're making, we can't – just because we stopped their plutonium and their weapons program?

I find this an absolutely bizarre discussion that can only be explained in terms of American ideology and kind of a moral approach to this. Is this moral? Is this moral? Is this in the national security interests of the United States of America and its allies? Don't ask whether you think you're being treated fairly by the North Koreans. For god's sakes, that ain't the question.

Are you better off with this deal? And the answer is unambiguously, given where we are now, yes. I remind you I thought the Syria deal was the deal right now. That's something up with which we cannot put. We cannot, we cannot, tolerate that. And I'm talking about the old-fashioned red line where it means something. All right. That's what I would like on this. The transfer issue needs to be dealt with.

Okay, quickly, Carl. North Korean policy hasn't worked. Right, you know, it's – Carl did the version of if you're in a hole, the first thing you do is stop digging. Okay. I don't think that's true. I think North Korean policy has worked and hasn't worked and is working again. I think something is pretty clear. The North Koreans have always wanted to make a deal with us. But they want a deal. They have a security problem, they built a nuclear weapons program, they're willing to give up their weapons program maybe, they're certainly willing to rent it, right, for a while, maybe even give it up, got to test it. All right.

So I think the negotiated agreed framework worked. I don't think they got what they wanted, not that they didn't get the political performance they wanted, then they cheated, new administration came in, doesn't like negotiation as a way of dealing with a rogue state with a nuclear weapons program, so we don't have negotiations and they separate plutonium and the policy does fail. But that policy failed, not negotiation. We're back to negotiation and it's working. Their program stopped again.

We've got to get our objectives straight. The game is lost. I think that's wrong, fundamentally wrong. The game ain't lost. They don't know something really now that they didn't know before very much. Maybe a couple of technical people picked something up with that low-yield device they detonated, but there's no big secret here on a fission device. They really – you know, we're not talking about lost virginity here, it's irretrievable, we can't go back. That isn't it. That's not what we're dealing with here.

The question is are they going to have a nuclear weapons program and a stockpile of nuclear weapons or are they not? And right now, they're not. Right, if we can continue down the road we're on. It is a big deal and, yes, you can reverse it. We reversed in South Africa. There's reversal in Argentina. There's reversal in Brazil, reversal in South Korea, reversal in Taiwan. It's a continuum. And detonation of a device doesn't mean you can't go back. You can. It's the situation you're in eventually that matters and I don't think you should write this one off.

This is too hard to do. I don't think negotiating – and I'm going to get Jack on this one – I don't think negotiating with North Korea is very hard at all. I don't. Not if the administration supports you. I had an administration that was, you know, gang, way to go. Right. This administration has not told Jack Pritchard, way to go, Jack, bring me back another one. It hasn't

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been like that. And Chris doesn't have that kind of an administration behind him now either. So this is hard to do with a divided bureaucracy, but I don't think it's hard to do with North Koreans. Try negotiating with the Iranians. (Laughter.) I think that's hard to do, not North Koreans.

We need a new paradigm. No, we don't. This paradigm is perfectly fine, the paradigm where we negotiate with the North Koreans. The one where we don't doesn't work. The bit about different channels to the North Koreans, actually, I'm sure what Carl said is true and because I'm sure it's true, it distresses me, which is to say, I absolutely agree with him on this. If we have blown opportunities to deal with the North Koreans at different levels, if we have been, for some reason, afraid of that, it is really a mistake, because one of the things I thought I learned in negotiating with North Korea is we didn't have the complexity of contacts that we needed. And so I think Carl's absolutely right on that one.

Inspection, it has to be intrusive and I agree, but I think inspection and verification can be what does us in if we're silly about it. Remember the old standard in the old days of arms control? It was can you achieve sufficient transparency, can you verify to a degree such that you will count – you will catch significant cheating? That's the old kind of practical one, all right. Because if they can cheat a little bit, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Remember, this is not a moral game. This is a question of national security. So for me, be careful about this. Yes, you do want an intrusive regime.

I don't know whether Carl is right. He may be about it's better if we don't do it. But if we go back 14 years, the guy I talked to, Vice Prime Minister Kan Chuck-Choo (ph) at the time, didn't want the IAEA; he'd prefer to have the United States of America, which is the sole remaining superpower running around its country, as opposed to this international organization called the IAEA. But maybe that's changed, I am out of date, and Carl may be right. I just simply don't know.

North Korea isn't the most important issue in Asia. No, it's not the most important issue in Asia, unless it is. (Laughter.) It is if North Korea is the source of fissile material for a weapon that blows up in an American city. Then, it's the most important issue in Asia, by far. I'm back to Syria. Put that aside and then I'm with Carl. If we miss China because we're focused on North Korea – (chuckles) – we will have made a pretty serious mistake with the transfer issue.

Invite Kim to Camp David. I don't think he's going to go any place he can't take a train to – (laughter) – so I think I'm in check in my geography here. I would have no problem with inviting him, though. I think it would be a nice gesture. I often invite people that do things knowing that they can't. (Laughter.) I guess probably they know I know. Never mind.

North Korea should not have to prove that we can trust them. That is one that I think is an overarching point, which I completely agree with, and ought to condition what we do. The word trust is pernicious, I think, in this stuff. Do we trust North Korea? Did you make a deal, as the congressman said, with a country that we can trust or did you make a deal with a country we can't trust? The latter. (Laughter.) And it's okay with me.

But again, if you approach this as a moral issue and put the national security aside, you're going to come up with what I would regard as screwy answers. And we have for a long time. I think now we're on the right track. I'd give these guys some running room. Thanks very much. (Applause.)

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MS. SQUASSONI: Well, thank you both for some terrific remarks. We're going to start the question and answer session. I think we have some microphones on either side. What I'd like you to do is state your name and affiliation. But I'm going to take the chair's prerogative here and pose the first question. I think, Bob, you raised the question of, on verification, you know, what's good enough? We all know, I think, what the best is, what we'd love to get from the North Koreans, not on assurances, because they give us plenty of assurances, but on information and verification. So I wondered if both of you could just spin out a little for us what, on the enrichment question and on the transfers to Syria, what's good enough in terms of information or verification?

MR. FORD: Please.

MR. GALLUCI: On Syria, I'm over the top on this one. I want to know everything. I want to know exactly what they did in Syria. I want to know when, I want to know timeframe, I want to know the plans for fueling the reactor, I want to know plans for reprocessing the spent fuel. I want to know every bit about that. And I want to persuade them that we are absolutely serious that we will – what was Senator Clinton's word about –

MR. : Obliterate.

MR. GALLUCI: Obliterate. That we're in the obliterate mode before we will allow an American city to be lost to fissile material that comes from North Korea. So I, on the Syrian thing, this isn't any quarter I would give them on that. That is an absolute requirement.

On the enrichment, I assume, I may be wrong about this, but there's going to be a box, several boxes of stuff that North Korean guys are looking to stick together and they haven't been able to do it and that if we get some access to that and it fits with our general understanding of what's been transferred, that'll be quite enough. I don't think we have to go too far down that road. We have to get some satisfaction.

Much more important with respect to things like that, like the enrichment program, is the future and that goes to the regime, whatever it might be. I think one of the things we want for sure is an arrangement for essentially no notice inspection by somebody. And it could be by the IAEA. To get that, you're going to have to go beyond 153 special inspections provision that's in the Standard Safeguards Agreement. You'll need something special. But what we will want with North Korea, if we can get it, is an arrangement whereby informed by intelligence from whatever source of some site, we will be able to have somebody inspect that site. We have to – we will be concerned about ad hoc small centrifuge fissile material production, even more so than a reactor, in terms of something difficult to hide.

So that's the direction I'd like to go, but apart from the Syria thing, I'd warn y'all on this one that remember what you're comparing this to, not the perfect transparency in which we absolutely have it not cold and you can go before the Senate committee and say they can't cheat. I mean, I was asked about the '94 agreement and, you know, a senator said, can they cheat, and I said, absolutely, they can cheat. I don't think they can cheat in a way that we won't ultimately catch them, so I don't think the cheating presents a serious problem for us, but they certainly can cheat. And if they cheat, I predict that they'll cheat in centrifuge technology. We've seen it in Pakistan. We've seen it in Iraq. There are good technical reasons for this.

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So that's the direction I'd like to go, but I, in the end, I would look hard at whatever we're able to get and then compare it with something that makes sense in terms of another outcome.

MR. FORD: Well, this is really a difficult one for me and I'm sure everybody else. I don't want it to happen again. And I'm not sure that requiring them to make promises or giving evidence is going to really deal with the problem, so that for me, it's how do you stop North Korea from doing what they did in Syria again, someplace else or something like that? And that should be our focus, because there's not much that North Korea could do for me that would give me some confidence that that we're stopping them from proliferating.

That's maybe a cop out, but I just don't think that asking for – putting down rules and regulations or making it a legal sort of thing is going to work. It didn't work with anybody that's proliferated. So I have some questions about that. I don't have any good answers.

The second part is from an intelligence perspective. All I can say is don't count on us to do anything very much more than we did in Iraq. And that is a pretty low bar. So that if you want the intelligence community to create miracles, don't count on it. It simply is beyond our capability to provide the sorts of information that you and policymakers want on things like enrichment and the intentions and focus of the North Korean leadership. Wish we could. We didn't do it in the Soviet Union. We haven't really done it anywhere. And so to expect or to say, well, oh, this one we're going to do it better, is just fat bullshit. Don't buy it. Don't believe it. Find other ways to deal with this problem rather than depending on us to do the job.

Q: Hi, I'm John Wolfsthal at CSIS. Thank you both. I have two questions. One, how involved was North Korea in the Syria reactor? I'm sorry, but I have doubts. I believe Syria was building a reactor. I'm prepared to make that leap. But how involved was North Korea and what convinces you that that was really the critical connection? Because, you know, the video that was presented was a great marketing job, but was not an analytical assessment of what we know and what we don't know.

And Bob, I'm sorry, I was not one of your undergraduates, so I'm not as smart as I should be, although I do watch and make sure you go one through 10. (Laughter.) Does it matter if the cooperation that North Korea was giving Syria happened before an agreement was signed or not? You know, if it happened before the nuclear test and before the 2005 agreement, is that one thing or is it simply it happened, that's it, you know, we've got to strip you guys down to the bone? Because in my mind you're still – I'm not sure where these two pieces fit together. We want the plutonium. That's job number one. We've got to get Syria. Is that job number one as well or which is one and which is two? Because I think the agreement that appears to have been worked out is there's a one and there's a two and eventually we'll get to the Syria, but whether that's satisfactory.

MR. GALLUCI: So you want me to answer this, Carl? (Laughter.)

Q: I don't – you were specifically targeted on the which – (off mike) – plutonium in Syria, but I'm interested in the –

MR. FORD: I'll handle the hard ones. (Laughter.)

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MR. GALLUCI: Look, I don't know whether North Korea was involved in the construction of the reactor in Syria. I don't know whether the pictures were, in fact, of the inside of the building that was in Syria. I know what was in the newspapers about what the U.S. government said was true. All right. (Chuckles.) So I mean let's be clear about this. So I've assumed, as we all did in September of 2002, that what was being told to us was accurate about what was in this country in the Middle East.

If what we have is what it appears to be, namely that this reactor looks a lot like at Yongbyon and North Koreans are associated with the reactor and that they had some role in its construction, if they were not the major contractor, they were one of the subcontractors, I kind of want this – what I'm trying to say here is I want this whole story laid out clearly. It may be that someone from the intelligence community is going to say, not to worry, we got it, we know it all. That would be fine. I don't. But so I think this is that important.

The idea of building a production reactor secretly in Syria has a huge amount of sex appeal to me and needs to be resolved. So if there's a part of this that even with access to intelligence one believes the North Koreans know, but so far have resisted saying, I am saying get whatever there is to know. But I, in fact, don't know what that is. All right. Are we clear on that one? Good.

Okay, sir. What about the question of when the assistance when? Does that make a huge difference? Well, it sort of maybe does. Again, we're back to the ethically and morally here and, you know, can you trust them. Oh, this happened before we did the deal, so it's okay and they were still annoyed at what we did in 2002, so this is how they responded as well as doing this. You know, this is all part of that. Yeah, sort of. I don't care that much, in truth. I care about what they do much more than that sort of thing. But I can understand why someone else who is trying to put together sort of a mosaic of how the North Koreans think might care about that, but that's not big for me.

MR. FORD: I certainly am as concerned as Bob is about the Syria episode. I have to admit, I don't understand it even yet. I haven't any inside information any more than anybody else does. And it just doesn't make a lot of sense to me. I know what we think we know, but it still doesn't add up for me. I am in a sort of perverted sort of way glad that they attempted to try to proliferate with a nuclear reactor to build plutonium, because that's one of the few things that bad guys can do that we're pretty good at finding. (Laughter.)

I mean, it's hard to hide that, so that they have at least tipped us off that either individual entrepreneurs in Korea or the government itself is willing to take risks that we would hope they wouldn't be willing to take. And so it may be a – it's not a great thing, but at least we now have – we've been warned. And we know that we've got to keep looking even more carefully.

Q: (Inaudible) – my question is that we are living in a very dangerous world, the nuclear world, many countries are trying to get nuclear weapons, including many terrorists in many countries and that's a big danger that we should focus on in the future. But somebody must be supplying or transferring the technologies to these countries, North Korea, Syria, or Iran, or the terrorists, so don't you think we should also focus those countries who are breaking the international rule? And India has it, Pakistan has it, so now terrorists are trying to get it. Do you see any confrontation in the future, nuclear confrontation, from any country or from the terrorists?

MR. GALLUCI: That's a hard one; you take it.

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MR. FORD: Well, obviously none of us would like to see a nuclear confrontation between anybody, whether it's India and Pakistan, or terrorists in the U.S., terrorists in Israel, or whoever the threat may be levied against. I still go back to – I force myself to remember that what first got us excited and concerned about nuclear weapons so much was that the United States and the Soviet Union could destroy all of us, the whole world, if we weren't careful. There were just thousands and thousands of nuclear weapons and we were talking about almost the end of civilization as we knew it as a worst case.

I'm not suggesting that three nuclear weapons in Los Angeles is good. But let's don't forget that's a different level of danger and worry than a full lay down – (chuckles) – that we envisioned in the past. There is a difference in the quality and the extent of the danger. That doesn't – I'm not suggesting that we shouldn't be worried about it. But I think that if we are letting that be the thing that drives us, we are going to miss a lot of other problems that we ought to be focused on.

MR. GALLUCI: And I think there's an area here where we clearly disagree. And I just don't want to miss this opportunity to point it out. I think that we are in more danger now of suffering a catastrophe than we were during the years of the Cold War. I recognize that when you have 20,000 or 30,000 nuclear weapons pointed at you and they're thermonuclear weapons and they have yields in the hundreds of kilotons and low megatons, that that's different than a single device of 10 or 12 kilotons in an American city.

But I find the current situation of not having a defense nor a deterrent against this particular threat to be a very dangerous one, where the probabilities, while small, are not remote to me. The prospect, it seems to be, quite plausible that we will suffer a catastrophe that would kill a hundred (thousand) to 200,000 people promptly. And that that could happen in three cities, if you can believe it, it can happen in one city.

So this is, for me, the number-one threat to the national security and probably will remain so unless we come in to a more traditional conflict with a country like China, which I think while possible, is not itself likely. So I think Carl and I may be disagreeing here about the character of this threat and where it should kind of set down, for example, in a new administration.

I'm not at all saying we could – you got to focus on this, the exclusion of the rest of the world, but this is, to me, a very special threat, which I would not want to diminish by comparison to the character of the threat we suffered during the Cold War.

MR. FORD: We may not disagree as much as that suggests. I mean, I suggest that we ought to change from what the present administration is doing and that is that almost total concentration on this is the only threat to the United States. And if that's what you want, vote for McCain and that's what I'm talking about.

MR. : McCain? (Laughter.)

MR. FORD: That's right.

MS. SQUASSONI: All right, let's take two questions at a time and first, we'll go to Joel Witt (sp) and then, I think, Miles Pomper. And can I ask you to be brief, please?

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Q: Of course. I have a very quick question for Carl, actually, and it goes to the uranium enrichment issue. I know you're probably constrained about what you can say but you were, in fact, in the intelligence community at the time that that whole issue broke in 2002, I guess it was. And I'm wondering if you could just, you know, say a few words about your perspective on what the level of threat or your evaluation of the level of threat from that program, particularly back then?

MS. SQUASSONI: Okay. And then Miles.

Q: This is for Bob. Could you talk – I mean, you mentioned the transfer issue several times. I mean, what exactly would you do about it? I mean, if that's not going to be something that holds up further progress, what would be your approach to both getting them to admit what's happened so far and being assured that this is not taking place in the future, particularly verification of that somehow?

MR. FORD: Uranium enrichment. I – my view has been that before we make judgments on such crucial important issues is that we ought to have some evidence; that this is not – intelligence is not a guessing game, or it should be, at least, you guess based on some evidence and that in this particular case, I was extremely concerned that people were giving a lot more credit to the evidence than I thought it deserved. So I don't – my position was I don't think we knew enough to make any judgments about it, certainly not in the – as precisely as we tried to do it and I think it's complicated our discussions with the North Koreans. We'll continue to discuss – to cause problem because we're now worrying about how many – how much plutonium they have. Sure, we never knew. So the idea that we somehow – they aren't leveling with us is really just sort of a nonsensical sort of approach. All we got is what they're going to tell us and anybody that says, well, that's not enough – it's more than we've ever had before in order to make a judgment. And that's what we're going to base our views on is what they eventually give us.

MR. GALLUCCI: I take it when you say what would I do about the transfers, you mean North Korean transfer issue, not the transfer issue writ large, is that correct? I have put a lot of emphasis on getting North Koreans to come absolutely clean on Syria because I don't believe we can be taken seriously with respect to how serious this is for us unless we make that a requirement of the deal. In addition, it would be nice to know everything about this, assuming there's stuff that we don't yet know about this transfer. So I put that first. Second, we want to make sure that North Korea, in terms of fissile material, can't be the source. So we ought to be doing everything we can first, with respect to the Plutonium Declaration Removal of Plutonium and then the transparency to assure ourselves that they don't have fissile material to transfer.

And third, I think since we're talking about state activity here and not, for example, the Russian case or the Pakistani case, where – I don't think anybody believes that Putin or Musharraf would purposely transfer but we can't exclude the scenario in which the material leaks out of the country, all right? In the North Korean case, we tend to think about this as a much more centralized situation so we want to achieve deterrence and we want to make sure they understand that we would treat them as the attacker if we suffered detonation on our soil or an ally's soil when the material from that detonation came from there country. So I'd think in the first, you'd try to get the material, try to get clarity on the Syrian case and establish very clearly the kind of deterrence that we think we had during the Cold War.

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Q: Just as a follow up, this is not the material in this case. This is technology and know-how.

MR. FORD: Mm-hmm. Yeah, well – it would be that – the idea would be, when I say deterrence, their role in a development, a case, in which we suffered a catastrophic loss as a result of that role, one in which we treated them as the attacker. So their assistance, again, would have – they would have to understand that that was the price of assistance. We haven't done that with respect to the transfer of the missiles. I mean, to Pakistan and to Iran, we haven't done anything like that. The president said something along those lines but in one of the few times I can ever think of, I agreed with the Charles Krauthammer piece, in which he said he thought the president should have had a little more clarity on that point if he wanted it to be a deterrent threat and I agree.

MS. SQUASSONI: Let's take two more questions. Sandy and then this gentleman in the middle.

Q: Thank you. I'm Sandy Spector (sp) with the Monterrey Institute. Avner Cohen and I have been somewhat critical of the way in which the intelligence community has communicated these very difficult nuanced understandings of some of these programs to the public. In the Iran NIE case, the – what came out in public, of course, said there was, as we all know, no nuclear weapon program in Iran after 2003 with a footnote, which said, of course, we only mean this part. And my sense is that they stumbled a second time in trying to explain the Syrian case when they gave chapter and verse about all the elements of this reactor that made it clear it was a North Korean-built reactor modeled on Yongbyon for the purpose of producing plutonium. And then came to the conclusion that they only had low confidence that there was a nuclear weapons program in Syria. How would you have said it, Carl or Bob? (Laughter.)

MS. SQUASSONI: All right, let's take a second question.

Q: Yeah, I have a question – Fritz Ermarth (sp) – for both speakers. You know, no paradigm or concept for managing the North Korean nuclear problem over the long haul really makes intellectual sense or strategic sense unless it's accompanied by some kind of a conception of the state and evolution or change or future of that system. So I'm just asking you kind of what are your assumptions about permanence, impermanence, explosion, implosion? Carl, you alluded to liberalization by railroad. (Chuckles.) And Bob, you said, well, we – to get the strategic results, we got to put the human rights issue off or to the side of the diplomatic agenda. Maybe that's so but the nature of the system is there. I mean, you got to face that and have some conception about how that relates to the nuclear problem.

MS. SQUASSONI: Okay.

MR. FORD: Sandy, I have had and still continue to have considerable angst and disagreement with the community's focus on confidence levels. I think that they are ridiculous. Policy makers don't want to know how confident I am about what's going on in North Korea. They want to see the evidence I have and the logic of my argument so that they can think through it themselves. So that me telling them that I'm highly confident is just simply a waste of space and breath and it suggests how bad and how deteriorated the intelligence community has become. That – it's one of those cases where confidence has nothing to do with it. If we're honest with people, we don't have – very confident at all because we don't have much evidence. Here's what we got.

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Here's what we think might be going on and you work with us, what do you take from this? Those are the sorts of approaches that we have to use rather than say trust us; we know what we're talking about and we have great confidence or a little confidence. It's kind of to the point where we will say we have high confidence on one thing and low confidence on another. It's all just trying to cover our ass. (Chuckles.)

MR. GALLUCCI: I want to go – (chuckles) – directly to your question – (chuckles) – but I must say I – unlike Carl, I have enjoyed this confidence crap. (Laughter.) I have found it absolutely hilarious. I – (laughter) – I still read for the intelligence community, read estimates, and when I read that the community judgment is that this is something that's probably not true and that they have low confidence in that – (laughter) – do I conclude that it probably is true? I mean in other words – (chuckles) – you know, does it have two probability statements they put into and it's absolutely mind boggling to me. So I know they're trying very hard to be good, you know. I mean, it's like a little kid, you know. I'm really going to get this right. I'm not going to over state this. I swear, I swear, I swear. (Chuckles.) I get it but, you know – (chuckles) – I accept what Carl said on that. Whatever the formula is that would be most useful, they haven't hit upon it yet. That's my view.

Okay, now specifically, Sandy, I thought the Iran thing – you know, that estimate put that way was a great disservice to the American people and to the international community, notwithstanding what the community says, the representatives responsible for this, which is, A, we never expected it to become public. Well, okay, but still. And second, you now, we call it as we see it. But no, you got to call it in a way in which you convey the substance of what a policy maker needs. The way I would torque your question is if you or Carl or I were going to go up and brief the president and you got that document, you got the document on Iran or you got the North Korea – what would you say to the president? The president says, well, they're sure it's a plutonium production reactor unconnected to – he wouldn't – the president wouldn't know all this – but unconnected to any nuclear power program anywhere on the planet but they're not sure it's a nuclear weapons program. What do you conclude about that?

Well, with high confidence – you know, the intelligence community is an idiot. I mean, of course, it's going to – (inaudible). What's the plutonium for, right? Well, there's no reprocessing plant. Okay, how long does it take long-pole intent? You know, you go and you ask these kinds of questions. So I would say – if I was briefing, I'd say, well, they must have misspoke or something, Mr. President, because clearly this is a nuclear weapons program and if you don't believe me, look – you know, ask the Israeli Air Force, you know, because that's what – and the Iranian case, similarly – I mean, to say that the nuclear weapons program has stopped: asterisk, we mean the effort to build the implosion system but not the long pole in the tent, which take five times as long as building the implosion system, which is merrily rolling along.

If I was briefing that, I'd say their nuclear weapons program has continued. There's a portion of it that they seem to have stopped. We don't why. We don't even know why they started it again. That isn't even terribly interesting to the president. This one, not only undercuts a military strike, which may be good, it also undercuts sanctions, which may be bad. So not international interest.

Fritz, your question. Do either of us think about, care about the character of the system and what it's likely to be in the impact of the change in character on what we may be recommending is how I took. What I was trying to say was as we go along with one of these deals and you get into

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the political-performance part, the character of the system is going to drive it as oppose to now, where it doesn't, where we can say, yeah, I know you torture your own people; it's really too bad but I got to get my hands on your plutonium. But in a little while, when we want to have the 12-year-olds come over here and we want, you know, have a political relationship and an embassy and all that, we're going to have to start de-marshing them seriously – that's a de-marshmellow in State Department terms – (chuckles) – over what they do to their own people. So I think the system is going to become very much more important. I will have low confidence with a high degree of certainty – (laughter) – that we will not necessarily know when the system is about to collapse, though, which I – you know – (chuckles) – we've have had a DCI say he thought that the North Korean government had three to five years left. He said that in the late '90s. (Laughter.)

MR. FORD: Well – and I – Fritz, on your part of the question, you have detected from my comment that I think that put it testing the North Korean regime, putting them in a position that is awkward for them and a position where they might make a few mistakes, is probably good for us. And from talking to the experts, I've concluded that they are not – they understand that reform is a bad idea if you want to stay in control the way they are in North Korea. So that they resist every effort to sort of change things and I don't think that's going to – we're going to see them do anything differently. They are clearly intent on survival of the regime – that's their thing. That's what we got to face up to – and so that if history is any guide, opening that society up, even whether they want to or not, probably helps us. And so I would be looking for things that even if they didn't want to, I would be trying to get them to accept an opening that would require their system to be put under stress and strain, if I could.

I don't think that they're going to collapse anytime soon. I thought that was sort of a ridiculous judgment in the first place. A country that is so tightly controlled at the top often are the most secure. And the ones that are trying to reform – trying to modernize – are often the ones that become more destabilized. So the notion that somehow they're going to do us a favor has always been, to me, being a poor policy choice. If I might, one thing on that – one comment about the Iran estimate. I think that one of the things that bothered me was – one, I hoped that it was right. I hope that they – their more optimistic view in the estimate was right. But what bothers me is best that I can tell – and they won't trust me with reading estimates anymore – (laughter) – because I've complained too much. They just – they won't let me see them.

MR. GALLUCCI: I tell them it's great work.

MR. FORD: I know. I know. (Laughter.) But was the point, as best I can tell form the news reports, is that we flipped 180 degrees based on one laptop that accidentally fell in our hands and had information on it that suggested they might have done something that we didn't expect them. So that our level of knowledge and our level of understanding could move that quickly and that far based on one thing, gives you an indication of what we do these days and that is that we watch current events. If a current even happens that changes our perspective, we just simply roll that way. There is a – if that's what you want from the intelligence community, okay. But I think that we have – we've done better in the past and I think we can do better in the future than simply make those sort of wild gyrations based on one collection effort.

MS. SQUASSONI: We are on a tight schedule, unfortunately. I wish this could go on for another hour but I would ask if you have – (chuckles) – well, not only has it been enlightening but

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entertaining as well. Do either of you have any last thoughts you'd like to share? No. No last wishes. (Laughter.)

MR. FORD: Well, when I – I'm going back to Mountain Valley, so ya'll won't –

MS. SQUASSONI: You're going back to Mountain Valley. (Laughter.)

MR. FORD: – you won't have to be bothered with me all that much any more.

MS. SQUASSONI: Well, on behalf of the Carnegie Endowment's Nonproliferation Program and the National Committee on North Korea, let me thank both of you and let's – all of us – thank our presenters for terrific – (applause) – presentations. (Applause.) And I think you all for coming.

(END)