

U.S. Diplomats Revolt Over Policy Toward North Korea

by Mike Billington

Dr. C. Kenneth Quinones, who played a leading role as a State Department official in the successful negotiations which resulted in the "Agreed Framework" with North Korea in 1994, held an extraordinary forum on Nov. 2 in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the newly created U.S.-Korea Institute at the School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University. Quinones said that it was necessary for him to "go public" at this time, following the North Korean test of a nuclear device, with his role as a civilian "back channel" between the North Korean government and leading officials at the State Department from 2004 until very recently. He reported that during these past two years, he had succeeded, not just once, but three times, in finding a basis for agreement between the governments of these two nations to re-launch negotiations toward a peaceful solution to the crisis over the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

In each of these cases, Quinones said, actions by the Bush/Cheney/Rumsfeld leadership sabotaged the efforts by others within the Administration: The first time, Bush publicly said he "loathed" North Korea's leader Kim Jong-il, calling him a "tyrant," leading to a cancellation of the talks; the second time, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld pulled U.S. troops out of North Korea, where they had been working cooperatively with the North Korean Army for years, searching for the remains of U.S. soldiers from the Korean War, and deployed F-117 Stealth fighters into the region, again scuttling the planned talks; a third effort succeeded in bringing about talks which led to the highly promising Sept. 19, 2005 agreement to dismantle the North's nuclear weapons program in exchange for development aid and diplomatic respect, only to see the Administration order a reversal on the promise to help with peaceful nuclear power development the very next day after the agreement had been reached.

Quinones said he was finally convinced that "the track

record of the current administration is not one of diplomacy, but rather one of vacillation, inconsistency, and ultimately the undercutting of the position and the efforts of its own diplomats."

Quinones said that he was compelled to speak out because he saw only two options for the future: Either true diplomacy be given a chance, or there would be a new Korean war, except that this time, the horrible decimation which befell the Korean nation in the 1950s would not be limited to the peninsula, but would engulf the region, and provoke a global economic crisis as well.

Other Voices

Quinones is not alone in speaking out. This past Summer, David Straub, a Korea expert who served for 30 years in the U.S. foreign service, including as head of Korean affairs at the State Department from 2002-04 under the first George W. Bush Administration, resigned from State and went public with his complaint that then-Secretary of State Colin Powell was "desperate to try to have some real diplomatic effort going" with North Korea, but that his efforts were sabotaged by the White House at every turn. At an Asia Society event in Washington on Oct. 5, Straub related that he had attended a press conference with then-South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and President Bush in 2002, in which Bush stated unequivocally that the United States would not invade North Korea. However, when Straub then used this pledge in his reports to describe U.S. policy, the reports were returned ("from an office that shall go unnamed," according to Straub) with the "no invasion" phrase scratched out, and "all options are on the table" written in. "Of course all options are on the table," Straub said, "but every time we said so gratuitously, we made the situation with our South Korean ally worse and made the prospect of coordination with South Korea to re-



Dr. Kenneth Quinones, a State Department Korea desk officer into the 1990s, succeeded three times in “back channel” negotiations, since 2004, in reaching agreement with North Korea, but each time was sandbagged by Bush and Cheney.

solve the North Korean problem diplomatically that much more remote.”

There are others as well. At the founding conference of the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS on Oct. 4, the seven living U.S. ambassadors to South Korea spoke on the current crisis, including Christopher Hill, who is now Assistant Secretary of State for Asia and the U.S. representative to the six-party talks with North Korea (which include the United States, South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia). Hill was the lead U.S. negotiator in the successful Sept. 19, 2005 negotiations, which were immediately sabotaged by those aligned with Dick Cheney in the Administration. At the SAIS event, Hill uttered the unfortunate formulation that North Korea “can have a future, or it can have these weapons. It cannot have both.” Such an existential threat gave most of the gathered former ambassadors chills.

James Laney, in particular, who served as ambassador during the successful 1993-94 negotiations, said he was “struck, and I must say, discomfited by the comment of Chris Hill.” He pointed to the “unacknowledged aim that sometimes emerges in the administration, of regime change,” which has made it “very difficult to send forth a credible message to North Korea.” The North, he insisted, “has always said, we want a security guarantee and we want investment,” and if we would simply offer them that, “leading to normalization of relations, I don’t know what we’ve got to lose.”

Laney had called on his friend Jimmy Carter in 1994 to travel to North Korea at a critical moment in the negotiations, which resulted in the Agreed Framework, and he called for a similar emissary today, suggesting James Baker III as a possibility, to go to Pyongyang to stop the rush toward war.

Former Ambassador Thomas Hubbard, who was the first ambassador to South Korea under the George W. Bush Administration in 2001, then offered that he “shared Jim Laney’s view strongly, that we really shouldn’t be making such a statement [as Hill’s threat] without having some options as to how to go forward,” and agreed that direct talks with North Korea (rejected by the Bush Administration) should proceed immediately, to “save us from the stark options that we seem to face if we go forward this way.”

Also speaking at the event was Donald Gregg, a career CIA officer from 1951-82, and then Vice President George H.W. Bush’s National Security Advisor before becoming Ambassador to South Korea when Bush 41 became President. Gregg insisted that we need to recognize that “North-South reconciliation is inevitable. It is going to take place no matter what. It is going to be with nuclear weapons or without nuclear weapons.” We do not want North Korea to have nuclear weapons, he continued, and neither do the Chinese nor the Russians, “but as weapons, they do not fear them, because they know that the North Koreans intend them basically as deterrents against us!” Gregg also warned against the view of some in the military, that we must “rely almost entirely on the Japanese relationship, as the [South] Koreans have become anti-American and are too close to the North Koreans. I think this is very shallow thinking.”

The Bipartisan War-Hawks

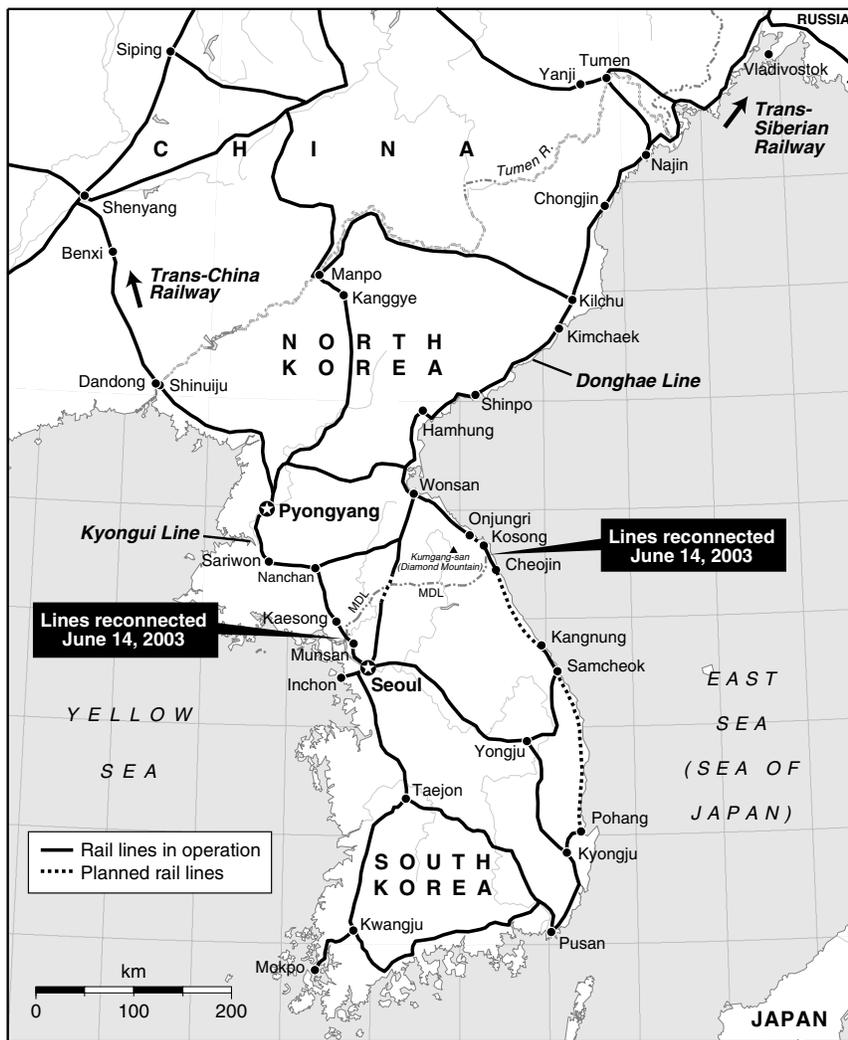
While it is increasingly clear that the Bush/Cheney team is willing and anxious to start war for war’s sake, to justify their drive for dictatorship under the guise of the “unitary executive” in wartime conditions, it must also be recognized that there are many on the Democratic side who are equally fanatical about the concept of “preemptive war” championed by Cheney and his mentor George Shultz. William Perry, who was Secretary of Defense under the Democratic Administration of President Bill Clinton, was chomping at the bit to go to war against North Korea in 1994, before Clinton and Jimmy Carter forced a peaceful solution through diplomatic means. One source who was close to the process told *EIR* that Perry and his associate Ashton Carter were “ready to go in, to prove that their ‘counter-proliferation’ theory (we didn’t call it ‘regime change’ then) would work.”

Democrat Perry has since become part of a traveling road show with Republican George Shultz, promoting “preemptive war” and “coercive diplomacy,” with North Korea prominent on the target list, along with Iran, Syria and Sudan.

When the Bush Administration repeatedly reneged on peace initiatives arranged by its own officials, the North Koreans’ response was to proceed with testing of their missiles and with nuclear weapons development—as clearly intended by Cheney (see “Cheney Wants War, Plays North Korea Card,” *EIR*, Oct. 27, 2006). The intended result was not necessarily a war on Korea, but to point to North Korea’s weapons development as justification for an immediate preemptive attack on Iran.

Nonetheless, when Pyongyang tested (unsuccessfully) a long-range ballistic missile in June, Perry and his cohort Ashton Carter wrote a *Washington Post* op-ed called “Strike and Destroy,” saying that it would be a “prudent policy” to take out the missile sites with cruise missiles, and to “introduce air and naval forces into the region at the same time it made its threat to strike,” to make any subsequent war “swifter and less costly in lives.” Cheney commented that he “appreciated Bill’s advice,” but that “you better not be prepared to fire

Major Railways of South and North Korea



Source: Ministry of Construction and Transportation (MOCT), Seoul, Korea.

John Sigerson / EIRNS 2003

just one shot.”

Jack Pritchard, the special envoy to North Korea who was fired by Bush in 2003 for the “crime” of talking to his negotiating partners from Pyongyang, responded to Perry’s bluster by saying that Perry and the war-hawks had better “give our chest-thumping, feel-good opinions a rest,” noting that the “missile test is not a violation of anything more than our pride, ripping a gaping hole in the false logic that talking with the North Koreans somehow rewards and empowers them.”

Then, when the North Koreans tested a small nuclear device in October, Perry not only threatened war on North Korea, but even blamed the proposed preemptive war on China and South Korea. According to the Japanese daily *Yomiuri*

Shimbun, which sponsored a Nov. 4 forum in Japan featuring Perry, he told the audience that if China and South Korea failed to “provide the coercion” by cutting off North Korea’s supply of oil and food, then the United States “might take the only meaningful coercive action available to it—destroying the [North Korean nuclear] reactor before it could come on line.”

If the new Democratic Party-controlled Congress looks to this faction of imperial thugs, the Congressional potential, and responsibility, to check the current rush to war will be lost.

A Provocation for War

Thus far, President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have insisted that there is no intention to attack North Korea. However, U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, has also insisted that the UN resolution passed by the Security Council on Oct. 14 imposing sanctions on North Korea, includes the right to stop North Korean ships on the high seas, to guard against suspected weapons proliferation—a policy Bolton and Cheney have pursued for years. This claim is false—the sanctions in no way legitimize such piracy—but such an attempt by Washington could create an incident that could spark a war in an instant.

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun has warned of such an “accidental war” being started by an effort to interdict shipping on the high seas. He told the South Korean General Assembly that “some argue that we should not shy away from going to war, which is truly irresponsible and dangerous.” He also rejected U.S. demands to curtail the “Sunshine Policy” of expanding economic and social relations between the two Koreas. When the White House claimed that any profits derived from the South Korean industrial park in the northern city of Kaesong, or from the tourists who visit Mount Kumgang in the North, could be used to finance nuclear weapons, and must thus be stopped, President Roh responded that these projects were “symbols of peace and stability on the Peninsula.” He added that “under any circumstances, inter-Korean dialogue must be sustained and the government will stick to the basic policy for peace and prosperity.”