



DATE: September 27, 2017

SUBJECT: An Update on North Korea's Abduction of Japanese Citizens | CSIS

MAIN POINTS:

- All agreed there are a number of things which can contribute to progress on the NK abduction issue and its resolution;
 - Senator Lee's Congress resolution for a Sneddon investigation, the passing of the National Defense Authorization Act to put pressure on China and Russia, placing NK back on the State Sponsor of Terrorism list, a 13-country coalition, behind-the-scenes diplomacy, the participation and cooperation of the SK government in a bipartisan manner, and a new Special Envoy to NK Human Rights.
- All agreed that a soft approach does not work as NK has no sincerity and has deceived and manipulated victim countries many times.
- David Sneddon's brother and mother agreed that most debates over what steps to take have been "silly", and that we must not forget the citizens of NK and view them as victims.

The event can be viewed at: <https://www.csis.org/events/update-north-koreas-abduction-japanese-citizens>), accessed 09/14/2017.

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EVENT OVERVIEW

Date: Wednesday, September 13, 2017)

Time: 9:00 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.

Location: CSIS Headquarters, 1616 Rhode Island Avenue NW, Washington DC

Attendees:

- **Host and Moderator, Michael J. Green**, Senior Vice President for Asia and Japan Chair, CSIS
- **Speaker, Michael Lee**, Rep. Senator – Utah, member of the Judiciary Committee, Chairman of the Antitrust, Competition Policy and Consumer Rights Subcommittee
- **Speaker, Keiji Furuya**, Member, House of Representatives, Former Minister in Charge of Abduction Issues

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- **Panel Discussant, Yoichi Shimada**, Vice President, National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea
 - **Panel Discussant, Eriko Yamatani**, Member, House of Councilors, Former Minister in Charge of Abduction Issues
 - **Panel Discussant, Takuya Yokota**, Secretary General, Association of Families Kidnapped by North Korea
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SUMMARY

Michael Green, as moderator, began the discussion by introducing the speakers, Senator Mike Lee (rep. Utah), and Keiji Furuya.

Senator Mike Lee began by mentioning that Japan has suffered a great deal as a result of North Korea's criminal abductions, and that no country has done more to document these abductions or to make sure the world recognizes them. He highlights that decades ago, we would not be here; the abductions were less well known, not accepted as facts, the stuff of rumor, conjecture, conspiracy theories, and were seen as too tenuous or far fetched, even for the notorious hermit kingdom. He then discussed the disappearance of David Sneddon, in China in 2004, and his captivity and role in North Korea, currently, as an instructor to NK agents. He follows with statistics;

- 1) since Korean war; regime ordered the abduction of over 80,000 prominent South Koreans.
- 2) regime tricked 90,000 ethnic Koreans in Japan to travel to North Korean to build a worker's paradise.
- 3) over 100 abductions in Japan have been attributed to North Korea since then.
- 4) over 4000 South Korean fisherman have been abducted after run ins with North Korean intelligence vessels.
- 5) Pyongyang's reach extends far beyond Asia Pacific region; London, Copenhagen, Beirut.
- 6) the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea estimates that as many as 180,000 have been abducted by North Korea.

Lee followed by saying that the NK regime likely acknowledged the abductions in the hopes that it would lead to a multi-billion dollar reparations payment from Japan. He later emphasized that it is easy to lose sight of the abductions in light of the regime's more flagrant and obvious

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violations, and said: “In stark contrast to its nuclear program, abductions seem like quiet crimes, but they feel anything but quiet to us. Because of their quiet nature, it is up to the free world to be loud.”

He followed by discussing his proposed joint resolution in Congress, which encourages the state department and intelligence community to investigate all plausible explanations for David’s disappearance, including abduction by North Korea.

Green followed by bringing about the issue of China not being forthcoming on this issue, or on implementing sanctions against North Korea. He asked Lee: “Can you say something more about the prospects for legislation that would bring to bear some more sanctions and specific tools to get cooperation from China on some of these issues?”

Lee mentioned the possibility that the passing of the National Defense Authorization Act would apply more pressure by way of sanctions on China, encouraging them to be more forthcoming with what they know.

Furuya spoke next, introducing himself as a member of the House of Representatives, as the former abduction minister, and the current head of the Abduction Issues Caucus. He began by emphasizing the importance of making North Korea understand that there is no future for them if they continue this pace. Next, he discussed the historical background of the abduction issue;

- 1) North Korea engaged in its abduction activity of Japanese nationals mainly in the late 1970s to early 1980s, and continued somewhat into the 2000s.
- 2) The media reported North Korea’s abduction issues, but the public was skeptical of such an outrageous idea that goes against common sense.
- 3) The Japanese government and ruling party at that time had more interest in the normalization of the bilateral relations with North Korea, so they were rather passive in recognizing the abduction issue. Similarly, the US government pointed to the lack of concrete evidence as a reason to avoid the issue.
- 4) In the 1990s, Megumi Yokota became an abductee at the age of 13 and became the symbol of the abduction victims, and received much attention from the media, leading to the issue receiving much attention. This effort has invigorated public discussion which consequently led the central government to officially identify the abductees.

Furuya followed by discussing the motives for North Korea’s abductions, namely; the need for instructors of North Korean agents, and the need for printing engineers for the purpose of

fabricating counterfeit dollar bills. He mentioned that these abductions were targeted not solely to citizens of Japan or South Korea but of 13 countries. He then highlighted that state abductions of another country's citizens is a criminal act equivalent to terrorism, and that he, along with others in Japan very much feel that North Korea should be placed back on the State Sponsors of Terrorism (SST) list, which it was taken off of by the US in 2008. He added that cooperation between our two governments will be integral to solving this issue.

Mr. Yamata, a second House of Representatives member, then added to Furuya's speech, by saying that although missiles and nuclear issues are of course something everyone is interested in, kidnapping is really the ultimate form of infringement on human rights. He added that it is unbelievable that this is continuing, and that Japan must work to solve this issue, and that he hopes the US, Japan's ally, will work with Japan to clear up this abduction issue.

Green then invited panel members to join him on stage.

Green began the discussion by saying that when working for the Bush administration, the team, along with lawyers, agreed that North Korea would not be lifted from the SST list until there was substantive progress on the issue of abductees. The intention, he said, was to keep the pressure on NK and to recognize that this was a kind of terrorism, even though it didn't fit the exact legal definition the State Department had used. At the time it was lifted from the list in 2008, many critics in American academia and media were saying that Japan was an obstacle to diplomacy with North Korea, because Japan was keeping the focus on the abductee issue. Green stated that he found this stunning, and that he said so publically. He followed by saying that those days are behind us, now that there is much more recognition and evidence of North Korea's human rights record. He highlighted that even China and Russia, who continue to block efforts at the UN, can not ignore this. In conclusion to his short introduction, Green asked to the panel: What can we (think tanks, intellectuals, the media, Congress, the administration), do to help you move forward on this issue?

Takuto Yokota was the first to answer, highlighting that in talks with North Korea, either involving Japan or the United States, a soft approach really never works, and that we need a strong approach to them. He added that there was one thing he would like to request from the US, which is for NK to be relisted on the State Sponsor of Terrorism list, in that their removal may have led NK to continue its outrageous actions.

Green followed by asking Eriko Yamatani, to give her thoughts on what she has learned in this process, and asked how she sees the politics of this issue in Japan or around the world, and what

the next step is from her perspective.

Yamatani began by introducing herself as the former Minister of Abduction Issues, having set up a special committee to investigate the abductions, now serving as Chair, and as the LDP head of the Task Force for Abduction Issues. She first mentioned that the Abe government has paid the utmost attention to this issue of abductions by North Korea, that he along with President Tom have been very interested in the issue and are aware of the deep nature of this problem, and that she is glad that President Trump is as interested in the issue as the Japanese are. She added that Bush's strong opposition to North Korean nuclear weapons and his title of North Korea as a member of the axis of evil put much pressure on NK and may have led to Kim Jong-il to admit that NK had abducted Japanese citizens. She then mentioned that there are a number of different and serious issues in NK, including the cyberterrorism issue, and emphasized that we need to keep in mind that NK may bring us to edge of disaster. She added that there has been more media attention to the issue, but there are important steps up ahead:

- 1) increased international cooperation with Japan
- 2) North Korea's placement on the SST list
- 3) The UNSC taking up this issue and strengthening sanctions on NK, perhaps passing a resolution or at least talking about passing a resolution dealing with this issue.

Green then asked Yoichi Shimada to share his thoughts on what must be done, and the effectiveness of the US and Japanese approach.

Shimada began by mentioning how discouraged he felt when the US took NK off the list of SST. Japan was critical of this decision, and many believed North Korea was tricking the US on the nuclear issue. He then discussed a WSJ interview with Robert Gates, in which Mr. Gates argued that the US should admit that NK has nuclear warheads, and should put less importance on humanitarian issues and instead deal more with the nuclear issue. Shimada argued that by disregarding the human rights issue, the abduction issue is also neglected. He followed by agreeing with other panelists, in that he would like the US-Japan cooperation to continue.

Green followed by saying that placing NK on the SST list was designed to incentivize NK to give the US a preliminary document on their nuclear capabilities. The US lifted NK from that list and got nothing. Green said: "it was a complete bait and switch by NK." He argued that in his view, a lot of people would agree it is time to put NK back on the list, and that it is very important both to demonstrate as a matter of fact that NK is sponsoring terrorism, and as a demonstration of the US commitment to the issue and its solidarity with Japan and the other

countries who have suffered. He argued that we will not move to normal diplomatic relations with this regime, anytime soon, if ever.

Shimada argued that now is not the time for diplomatic efforts, because once a dialogue is opened, sanctions must be loosened towards NK. In his opinion, it must be done behind the scenes. He argued, however, that by interacting in an open manner, such as six party talks, China and Russia will probably pull them behind. He next mentioned that the reason why NK is not releasing Sneddon, or Yokota, is because they are serving as instructors for NK agents who are now all over the world. Once the abductees are released, he said, they will point to those people to whom they have given instruction.

Yokota then began by saying that he and his group questioned what aid, in the form of tens of thousands of tons of rice in the name of human right support, leads to, as this aid did not lead to resolutions. North Korean nationals are victims, he said, but even if we approach NK with good will, it does not lead to anything, so it is something that we must hold firmly.

Yamatani next spoke about NK's lack of sincerity and manipulation of information. By compromising and trying to approach them, we have all been betrayed by them. She argued that we must pressure them to realize that they must change to be a part of the international community.

Green agreed, saying that the media likes a big show, and NK uses that. Quiet diplomacy without drama, without bribes, he argued, is the right way to handle this going forward. He emphasized that in Japan, tensions with regards to abductions are very high and very bipartisan. South Korea, however, has many more abducted citizens, yet their politics are much more divided.

Shimada followed by saying that the Moon administration has done many things which we could call appeasement. For now, he argued, we think this is a good juncture to work with SK, and we do esteem their efforts. He then mentioned that Japan is concerned with the historical issues that have existed between our countries. In 2015, he said, Japan and South Korea were to have universally settled this issue, but unfortunately there have been efforts to overturn that, and efforts to again bring up historical issues. He mentioned that this has damaged our efforts, and that he hopes there will not be obstacles to the efforts between our two countries.

Matsubara, a lower House member of the Japanese Diet in charge of the NK abduction issue, agreed that it is very important for NK to be put back on the list, and for the US to be the leader of a 13-country coalition. In his opinion, the abduction issue might be a way to reel in NK and

deal with the nuclear issue as well.

Tasukara, the secretariat of the members of the diet working on the abduction issue, mentioned that he was also living in Nigata at the time of Megumi's abduction, and that it affected him directly and profoundly. He added that the international community needs to be very strong in strengthening pressure on NK.

Green, concluding the panel discussion, reviewed the arguments made:

- 1) The importance of designating NK as SST
- 2) Senator Lee pushing for a thorough investigation into the Sneddon case (Green mentioned that it is his sense that if Senator Lee does not push this issue in the Senate, it will not happen naturally.)
- 3) Greater linkages with the 13 countries
- 4) Working with the Moon administration, as SK will be the most influential of these countries on this issue. If SK and Japan are involved, it is much harder for Beijing to ignore.

Green then argued that one more should be added:

- 5) Replacing Bob King with the new Ambassador for NKHR.

He mentioned that while many senior officials think it is inefficient to have so many special envoys when the Assistant Secretary for Asia should have such responsibility, it is an essential position, due to the need for someone who is accountable to that issue in Congress and to the public, and that will not be scared of cutting through bureaucratic lines and of upsetting diplomatic relations to get some progress.

Q&A

Q: I am James Sneddon, brother of David Sneddon. I do not have any planned remarks, but will try to speak directly, candidly and from the heart. Yokota, we thank you for your support and your example for us. I know my mother has mentioned your mom and how much she appreciates her diligence and vigilance in this matter. As we can see they are no longer young, and your mother has been suffering for 40 plus years. I know what it feels like as a son to watch a mother suffer the loss of her child, the heartache is real and the sorrow remains. I am glad for these

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forums and that it keeps this at the center of attention, although, some of the dialogue, I find somewhat silly. That we debate whether or not NK is a state of terrorism is silly. There are clearly things that are evil and clearly things that are good. If you use the analogy of NK as a child, they do nothing but throw tantrums, and that immaturely on the world stage. In my mind, if it was an individual, we would incarcerate them. This is not a debatable subject. Obviously there is diplomacy, and people will say I'm naïve, as we have to work among people and policies and government officials, and I understand, I'm not a foolish man. But I think these things are almost silly at this point. They have played the debate and the negotiation game superbly, and from my perspective we have received nothing in return. I agree with diplomacy behind the scenes, don't let them use the press to their advantage, and move forward. I think our family feels very strongly, this is much more than David or Megumi or these abductees. Certainly that is an area of focus for us. But ultimately this is about the people of NK who are oppressed and who cannot live humane lives for the most part. I lived in Japan for 5 years, I started my career in Japan. I remember seeing a documentary where they had taken hidden cameras in and were filming the conditions of a starving nation. I saw children in the street drinking out of puddles of mud. That was 20 years ago. I saw a documentary recently about a doctor from Mongolia doing cataract surgery for the citizens of NK. After they had taken the bandages off their eyes, the first times they could see in years, with the doctor standing in front of them, there was not a simple thank you. They went immediately to a wall, with a picture of Kim Jong-il, and said "thank you great leader". The fact that you have a society where people don't recognize natural gratitude for someone who helps them see, either with fear, or the inability to understand the human dynamic. When you see children drinking muddy water in the street, it is oppressive beyond any description. To not call that a terrorist state, to not call that wrong, to not call it for what it is, we are irresponsible as citizens of the free society. It is not debate anymore. It is what it is. It's time to not only bring David home but free the people of NK. The debate is over in my mind. that's my words.

A (Green): I appreciate your comments. They are spot on. We all agree with you. How do we galvanize this growing consensus in US and Japan, spread it to other countries, get more concrete action, more resources, more focus, get a special envoy to NK who will focus on this. We are human beings, and this is a horrific x2 state. We will keep focus on this. Thank you.

Q: I am David's mother. When it was first discovered that David could be in NK, a lot of people thought we were crazy. Yokota I want to make sure you let your mother know; when I get discouraged I think of her, and I keep going, and I so grateful for her example. If anything comes out of this, I want to see the people of NK free. That's my goal. If we've sacrificed our son, and it helps bring to NK the freedom and the standard of living that we enjoy, I'm a dreamer, I will

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be very grateful. Thank you for what you're doing here today.

A (Green): With that we will conclude. Thank you.

Report by: Chloe Pulfer, Research Intern