

*Administration of Donald J. Trump, 2018*

**Remarks in a Meeting With North Korean Defectors and an Exchange With Reporters**

*February 2, 2018*

*The President.* Okay, thank you very much. We have a very special group of people with us today. These are escapees from North Korea. There have been many of them over the last year, and it seems to be more and more. It's a tough place to live, and people aren't liking it. It's great danger, great risk.

Sung-ho was with us the other night at the State of the Union Address and really made an incredible impression on me and on everybody else, both on television and in that magnificent room. And I had an opportunity to meet with some of the folks, and their stories are amazing. And I thought, through our really fabulous interpreter, we could probably go through a couple of the stories, because they're incredible and very inspirational. So escapees from North Korea. Go ahead.

*[At this point, an interpreter translated the President's above remarks.]*

Before we start, I just had a phone call with the President of South Korea, President Moon, and they are in dialogue, at least as it concerns the Olympics. And that's a good thing, not a bad thing. And we had a great call.

I also spoke to Prime Minister Abe of Japan, and we also had a very good call. So it's a very tricky situation. We're going to find out how it goes. But we think the Olympics will go very nicely. And after that, who knows? We'll find out. We're going to find out pretty soon, I suspect.

So I spoke to President Moon, spoke to Prime Minister Abe. And they were both very good calls, both concerning—essentially concerning North Korea.

So perhaps you'd do that, and then I will—I'll go ahead, and we'll introduce a couple of the folks.

*[The interpreter continued her translation of the above remarks.]*

Who would like to tell the story? Would you like to start by saying what happened and how it is over there? Because the world would like to hear.

*North Korean Intellectuals Solidarity founding member Hyun In-ae.* Yes, I taught in North Korea. I was a university professor. I actually taught Juche ideology, which is the North Korean leader's ideology. And I fled North Korea in 2004, and the reason was, my family was identified as a political prisoner. So we all had to go to a political prison. So we decided to flee and escape North Korea.

*The President.* That's tough stuff. That's pretty tough. So you got out, and hopefully, you're enjoying your life?

*[Mr. Hyun made brief remarks, concluding as follows.]*

*Ms. Hyun.* So I was able to get educated in South Korea, and I could say, freely, whatever I thought, which—you couldn't say anything or you couldn't criticize anybody in North Korea. So I'm really living a new life that I had not imagined before.

*The President.* Well, congratulations. That's great. That's great. It's a great story.

Yes, go ahead.

*No Chain for North Korea Founder Jeong Kwang-il.* My name is Jeong Kwang-il. I was also imprisoned in North Korea, a political prison. So I was there for three years.

[*Mr. Jeong continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

*Mr. Jeong.* We heard President Trump make the remark and speech at the South Korean National Assembly, and I was the first one to translate that speech and send it to North Korea. And the people who saw the President Trump's speech made at the Korean National Assembly was very moved and very impressed by the speech, and they were able to get confidence and support.

*The President.* Thank you very much. That's very nice. Thank you very much. Hope it helped. [*Laughter*] That's great.

Yes, ma'am.

*Former dancer and political prisoner Kim Young-soon.* Yes, my name is Kim Young-soon. I was a political prisoner in North Korea. I was imprisoned in Yodok Prison for 9 years. There's actually a musical, "Yodok," that is made based on my story. And I was—I became a political prisoner because I was friends with Kim Jong Il's wife during high school, so I knew a lot about their lives.

[*Ms. Kim continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

I fled North Korea in 2001, and I spent 2½ years in China. And I went and I came to South Korea after that, and it's been 14 years since I've lived in South Korea.

*The President.* And things are going well?

*Ms. Kim.* Yes, after I came to South Korea, I don't think I made any contribution to South Korea, but they welcomed me. And I have a very positive mind. So I'm very appreciative what I have right now and live happily.

*The President.* That's great. Great story. Thank you very much. It's an amazing story.

Please.

*Radio Free Asia broadcaster Peter Jung.* Thank you for inviting us in to listen.

*The President.* Thank you.

*Mr. Jung.* This is Peter—[*inaudible*—]from Radio Free Asia, that—a broadcast supported by the U.S. Government. I have been working in the U.S.A. So I escaped to China in 2000, and I lived in South Korea for 7 years. And the Radio Free Asia—[*inaudible*—]invited me to work in Washington, DC.

So we are happy in the United States. And last year, I became a U.S. citizen. I will—I was very honored to become United States citizen.

*The President.* Great. Wow. That's fantastic. Congratulations.

*Mr. Jung.* Thank you.

*The President.* That's great. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.

*Human rights activist and author Hyeon-seo Lee.* Mr. President, my name is Hyeon-seo Lee, and I'm the author of "The Girl With the Seven Names."

*The President.* Right.

*Ms. Lee.* And I come from the most ridiculous country on Earth.

First, I want to thank you for—that you said the U.S. will act alone on North Korea if China does not help. That made me cry, because that's what exactly what I wanted to hear for so long from, like, leaders like you.

[*Ms. Lee continued her remarks, concluding as follows.*]

So, Mr. President, please help us to stop the repatriations from China and give North Korean people the freedom that they deserve. Thank you for your time. Please.

*The President.* Thank you very much. Thank you very much. It's an amazing title of a book. Thank you.

*Ms. Lee.* Can I give you to you?

[*Ms. Lee handed a copy of her book to the President.*]

*The President.* Oh, good. Thank you.

*Ms. Lee.* Thank you for—[*inaudible*].

*Institute for National Security Strategy fellow Kwang-jin Kim.* Mr. President, my name is Kwang-jin Kim. I defected in 2003. I worked in Singapore as a banking agent. I worked for Mr.—[*inaudible*—who was executed, brutally killed by his cousin. And I ran revolution farm there, and I was lucky to escape North Korea with my wife and son. And my son is now staying. He actually, you know, graduated Yorktown High School here in Arlington.

*The President.* Good.

*Mr. Kim.* And I worked for 3 years for a human rights committee, U.S. human rights committee, in North Korea—here in Washington, DC.

[*Mr. Kim continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

And I'm sure that your message will be—will discredit the—you know, force the—will discredit the—I just forgot that exact wording of your speech. It will give courage to the North Korean elite and will be a great inspiration to many people there. So thank you so much.

*The President.* Well, thank you very much. That's really—they're incredible stories. We actually have two other people outside, and they're literally afraid of execution. They didn't want to be with cameras, and I can understand that. We were very concerned with that, and we would certainly not want to force them to be here. So they're right outside, but they didn't want to be on camera for a lot of very bad reasons.

I want to thank you. You were so incredible the other night during the State of the Union. The story of walking across China and further than that. There's sort of a funny story: When I said I'd like to have him stand, one of my people said: "Don't ask him to stand. He lost his foot. His leg is in terrible shape." I said, "He just walked across China." [*Laughter*] So he had no problem standing. I mean, to do what you've done is incredible. So would you like to say a few words?

[*The interpreter translated the President's above remarks.*]

*Now Action and Unity for Human Rights President Ji Sung-ho.* Thank you very much. This is unimaginable for me to be here and invited in such incredible events.

[*Mr. Ji continued his remarks, concluding as follows.*]

*Mr. Ji.* And I'm so appreciative that President Trump thinks about how the people in North Korea are suffering and that you're paying attention and trying to help us. So thank you.

*The President.* Well, we do. And those are amazing stories. And I want to thank you all for being here. This is the Oval Office. Very famous office. I guess, most of you have heard about the Oval Office. A lot of things happen here. Hopefully, they're all for the good, but a lot of things happen right in this space. So it's my honor to have you here. Thank you.

Okay. Thank you. Thank you very much everybody. Thank you.

*House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Majority Staff Memorandum  
Concerning the Use of Surveillance Tools by the Department of Justice and the Federal  
Bureau of Investigation*

Q. Mr. President, what do you think of the memo?

*The President.* I think the memo—I think it's terrible. You want to know the truth? I think it's a disgrace. What's going on in this country, I think it's a disgrace. The memo was sent to Congress. It was declassified. Congress will do whatever they're going to do, but I think it's a disgrace what's happening in our country.

And when you look at that, and you see that, and so many other things, what's going on—a lot of people should be ashamed of themselves and much worse than that.

So I sent it over to Congress; they will do what they're going to do. Whatever they do is fine. It was declassified. And let's see what happens. But a lot of people should be ashamed. Thank you very much.

*Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein*

Q. Are you not concerned that the FBI doesn't want the memo out?

*The President.* Thank you very much.

Q. Does it make you more likely to fire Rosenstein? Do you still have confidence in him after reading the memo?

*The President.* You figure that one out.

Q. We haven't seen it yet though.

*North Korea*

Q. Sir, is there a risk—[inaudible]—North Korea by having this meeting today?

*The President.* I don't think so. These are just great people that have suffered incredibly. There were many, many others like them that have suffered so much, and they were here, and I said, let's tell your story very quickly. We have others in a different room, as I told you, that are really petrified to be here. Petrified. So it's tough stuff. It's tough stuff.

*North Korea/2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea*

Q. Mr. President, do you believe there's more the United States can do to help North Korean defectors?

*The President.* Well, we're doing a lot. We've done more than—I mean, we have many administrations that should have acted on this a long time ago when it wasn't that this kind of a—when we weren't in this kind of a position.

You know, we ran out of road; you know the expression. The road really ended. They could've done it 12 years ago. They could have done it 20 years ago. They could've done it 4 years ago and 2 years ago. We have no road left.

So we'll see what happens. But, in the meantime, we'll get through the Olympics and maybe something good can come out of the Olympics. Who knows? Thank you very much everybody. Thank you.

*Deputy Attorney General Rod J. Rosenstein*

Q. Do you still have confidence in Rosenstein after——

*The President.* Thank you very much, everybody.

*Super Bowl LII*

Q. Super Bowl predictions? Super Bowl predictions, sir?

*The President.* I'd better not get involved. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:29 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Ms. Hyun referred to Chairman of the Korean Worker's Party Kim Jong Un of North Korea. Most participants spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the audio was incomplete.

*Categories:* Addresses and Remarks : North Korean defectors, meeting with President Trump; Interviews With the News Media : Exchange with reporters :: White House.

*Locations:* Washington, DC.

*Names:* Abe, Shinzo; Hyun In-ae; Jeong Kwang-il; Ji Sung-ho; Jung, Peter; Kim Young-soon; Kim, Kwang-jin; Lee, Hyeon-seo; Moon Jae-in; Rosenstein, Rod J.

*Subjects:* Defense and national security : Intelligence; Japan : Prime Minister; Justice, Department of : Deputy Attorney General; North Korea : Defectors, meeting with President Trump; North Korea : Human rights issues; Presidency, U.S. : State of the Union Address; South Korea : 2018 Olympic Games in Pyeongchang; South Korea : President; Sports : Football; Sports : Olympic Games.

*DCPD Number:* DCPD201800070.