

BROWNBACK STATEMENT ON STEPHENS NOMINATION

Floor Statement of Senator Sam Brownback on the Nomination of Kathleen Stephens to the Republic of South Korea

“Google Earth has made witnesses of us all”

Mr. President, I would like to ask unanimous consent that my full statement be printed in the record as if read. Also, I would like to ask unanimous consent for my staff member, Bryan Wandel, to be allowed floor privileges.

I would like to take this opportunity to explain why I have put a hold on the nomination of Ms. Kathleen Stephens as U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea.

Before I get to her nomination, last week, I had the pleasure of meeting with the new President of South Korea, Mr. Lee, Myung Bak, at a meeting hosted by the Senate Leadership.

I was encouraged to hear directly from him that under his administration, North Korea will no longer be able to rely on threats and blackmail to extract more aid from the international community and more time on nuclear negotiations.

I told the President and he agreed that we must begin to see real and verifiable results with the North Korean regime not only with its nuclear activities but also on the issue of human rights.

Without transparent improvements in human rights, I told him that the establishment of diplomatic relations would condone crimes against humanity on a massive scale.

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Without transparent distribution of humanitarian aid, unconditional aid would be used as a weapon of oppression and diverted from those in greatest need to those elites who get the most under the system.

These statements were a refreshing change from the previous administrations, and even from our own State Department.

In two meetings with Ms. Stephens, the nominee, I gave her every opportunity to explain to me why she should be our next ambassador to the Republic of South Korea.

I did not get the answers I was seeking.

Nor did I get satisfactory answers from Secretary Rice a week after my meeting with the nominee when the Secretary testified before the Senate Foreign Ops Appropriations.

I asked what our specific “asks” were of the North Koreans in terms of human rights.

I did not get an answer.

We are now approaching four years since the passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act of 2004.

I was willing to give the Department of State and other agencies time to implement the Act.

I was willing to give those implementing the law – which included Ms. Stephens – the benefit of the doubt.

I was willing to wait and see if the Department of State negotiators would be willing to confront the North Koreans regarding their human rights record.

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I wanted to see how much priority they would give to addressing the trafficking along the border or gaining access to the gulags that dot the country or to ensure that food aid would be strictly monitored.

I am still waiting as are the many individuals and groups working on North Korean issues.

23 million North Koreans are also waiting – as they have been for the past 60 years since the end of the Korean War.

Many are desperately waiting in the gulags I would like to show today.

These satellite photos are from Digital Globe, a satellite imaging company. They were taken from a program called Google Earth. Anyone with an internet connection can download this program and see for themselves. I even shared these with President Lee at our meeting.

The existence of these camps and the specific details have been confirmed by North Korean defectors living in South Korea. Some are guards, others former prisoners. I'd like to thank Rev. Chun Ki Won in particular for his assistance .

You could say, Mr. President, that Google Earth has made witnesses of us all.

In other words, we now have no excuses for ignoring the truth of what many believe is a holocaust that is occurring in North Korea today.

The U.S. Committee for Human Rights in North Korea believes that 400,000 have already died in those camps alone.

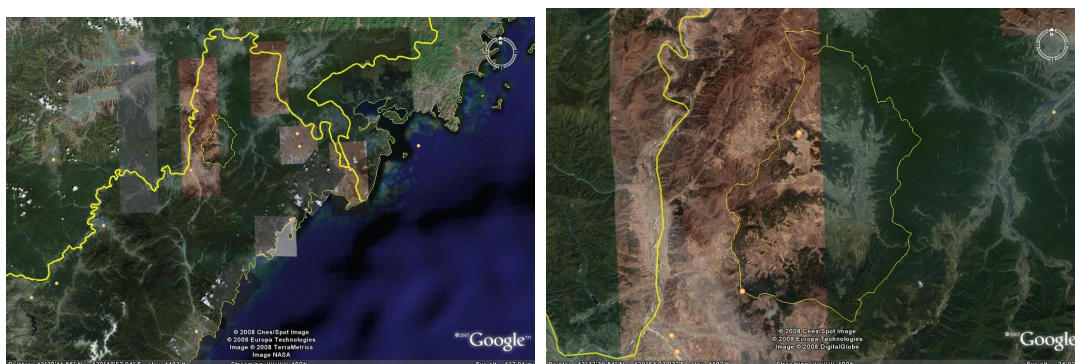
If you listen to the defectors' stories, as I have done on many occasions, the scale and depravity of the crimes that are committed in these camps rival those by the Nazis or Pol Pot in Cambodia.

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Yet too many of us refuse to confront it.

Maybe, we are afraid that confronting the atrocities of these camps would also require us to confront its urgent moral imperatives.

The first photo is of Camp 22 where chemical experiments are alleged to have occurred.



(photo of the camp in NK and closeup)

There are no surviving prisoners who made it out of Camp 22 that we know of, only guards. Of all the camps, it is the most brutal.

The guards we contacted were able to identify its electrified fences and moats. They were able to point out the huts where its prisoners live, the coal mines where men are worked to death, and the forests and fields where the dead are not so much buried as they are discarded.

Former guard Kwon Hyuk claims that the fences around Camp 22 are about 2 ½ meters high and electrified with 3,300 volts of electricity. He also says the camp is surrounded by land mines and spiked moats.

If you look carefully at the center of the courtyard in the middle of the guard station in this picture, you can see what appears to be a group of people.

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We will never know who those people are, but it's entirely possible that this remarkable photograph show a new group of prisoners being brought into Camp 22.

Outside the gates, life for North Koreans, such as it is, goes on. This year is said to be an especially difficult one in that part of North Korea, but the farmers outside the gate are still luckier than those inside.

The farmers cannot pretend not to know what goes on beyond the fence. One recent defector, who lived just outside Camp 22, told his American English teacher how the guards from the camp would come to his house in search of scarce food and alcohol, and how drunken guards would confess remorsefully to the cruelties they inflicted on the prisoners. The teacher published his recollections in the [Washington Post](#) last year, which I ask be made part of my statement.

This is the Chungbong Coal Mine in Camp 22:



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Ahn Myong Chol, a former guard and driver at Camp 22, described the working conditions in this mine. Prisoners work two shifts a day on meager rations. They are organized into five-person teams who are encouraged to earn rewards and supplement these starvation rations by informing on each other. Prisoners are beaten frequently, sometimes to death, and often for no reason at all. They work in cramped, narrow shafts. Accidents and cave-ins kill many prisoners; those who are injured are sent to a hospital without qualified staff or medical supplies, where they are essentially left to die. Others die of exhaustion as they try to meet daily quotas. Those who fail to meet the quotas are not fed.

There are dozens of these camps all over North Korea.



(map of all the gulags in NK)

We now have corroborated reports from multiple sources of the kind of depravity that continues in these camps to this day.

Multiple witnesses report that when China forcibly repatriates refugees to North Korea, those prisoners are severely tortured. Recently, North Korea has increased public executions for those

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caught crossing its borders. Pregnant women are forcibly aborted. If the women have babies, their babies are smothered with wet towels or buried alive. One woman claims to have witnessed guards force another woman to suffocate her own baby.

North Korea allows no worship of any religion but Kim Jong Il and his dead father, who is still the country's eternal president. Christians, or refugees who have had contact with them, are singled out for severe punishment, usually execution or slow death in a place such as Camp 22.

According to numerous NGO's and human rights organizations, the North Korean regime allocates food, including international food aid, according to social position and perceived party loyalty. At the height of the famine in the 1990s, the regime diverted shipments of food aid from the northeastern part of the country, where hundreds of thousands were dying of starvation, to the areas around Pyongyang where only the elite are allowed to live. Former USAID Administrator Natsios estimates that two and half million North Koreans died, nearly 10 percent of the population.

It is happening all over again. The food situation is so dire that another famine is being predicted. If the price of rice and other basic staples are at riot-levels in other countries, one can only imagine the desperation in these camps.

It is to horrors like these that we, the Congress of the United States, must act, whether in Darfur or Tibet or Burma.

Congress expressed that will to act when both the House and the Senate unanimously passed the North Korean Human Rights Act. The President expressed his will when he signed that Act in 2004.

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Yet four years later, our State Department, particularly its East Asia Bureau, of which the President's current nominee as Ambassador to South Korea was Deputy Assistant Secretary, has stalled and frustrated the funding and implementation of that Act in a way that could only be described as willful or grossly negligent.

What must we do and what must State Department do in particular?

First, we must speak the truth;

Second, we must not sustain the rule of those who commit crimes against humanity;

Third, we should use every practical means at hand to open these gulags and to put the issue of North Korean human rights squarely before the regime and in the negotiations.

I take no issue with Ms. Stephens's qualifications as a diplomat. But as Deputy Assistant Secretary of its East Asia Bureau, she failed to explain to me why the North Korean Human Rights Act was not being implemented.

In that Act, which became public law, Congress expressed its sense that human rights should "remain a key element" of our negotiations with North Korea. Yet our diplomats do not appear to have ever explicitly demanded an end to the killing fields of Camp 22, or so many other atrocities that regime commits.

Human rights concerns have been buried and forgotten within a "normalization working group," one of many issues that Ambassador Christopher Hill now says can be dealt with "in the context of two nations that have diplomatic relations."

No issue that is deferred until North Korea's main demands are met can honestly be described as "a key element."

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The Act expressed the sense of Congress that radio broadcasting into North Korea should be expanded to 12 hours a day. As of February of this year, the Voice of America [finally expanded](#) its broadcasting in Korean to [5 hours](#) a day. Radio Free Asia is also broadcasting for [5 hours](#).

That's an improvement, but it is too little and too late. We should also fund efforts by independent broadcasting organizations that are being run by former North Korean refugees.

The Act called for the establishment of a regional human rights dialogue modeled on the Helsinki Framework that proved successful in easing oppression within the Soviet Bloc and giving support to the dissidents behind the Iron Curtain.

Not only has no such framework been established, our State Department has never seriously proposed one.

The Act called for the appointment of a Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea. President Bush appointed Jay Lefkowitz to carry out the mission, but Ambassador Lefkowitz appears to have played no significant role even in the "normalization working group" at which human rights issues are to be discussed.

The Department of State has largely succeeded in frustrating Ambassador Lefkowitz's work, work that is important to this Congress, and work which the President has told us is important to him.

In Section 302 of the Act, the Congress sought to clarify that North Korean refugees should not be denied asylum in the United States by virtue of the fact that they are South Korean citizens.

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With neither the South Koreans and the United States willing to expedite their asylum requests, they continue to languish in places like China and Thailand.

In China, the policy is to round up these refugees and send them back to persecution or death in North Korea. By doing so, China violates its obligations under the U.N. Convention on Refugees, of which China is a signatory.

When the Chinese police round up these refugees, they sometimes shock them with electric cattle prods, string them together with wires jabbed through their wrists and noses, and even pay bounties to local citizens who bring them to the police.

To insist on Chinese concurrence before declaring a North Korean to be a refugee is like asking that Raoul Wallenberg obtain concurrence from the Nazis.

Section 303 of the Act states that our consular facilities must facilitate the submission of applications for asylum by North Koreans. Since most of these refugees are in China, and since China would haul them off to Kim Jong Il's gulag from our embassy's very gates, this section implicitly requires our consulates to at least let these refugees through the front gates.

Finally, the Act requires us to urge the Chinese government to provide North Korean refugees full access to the UNHCR. Years after the Act's passage, the Chinese still impede the UNHCR's access to the regions near the North Korean border.

The Chinese government has even bullied the UNHCR into denying asylum to North Korean refugees as it prepares for the Olympics by cleansing its territory of North Korean refugees.

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The law is not a bureaucratic obstacle course, and there are matters so close to one's conscience that they must be non-negotiable.

If gas chambers, infanticide, and the political cleansing of millions by famine are negotiable, then what conscience does our nation have?

If North Korea meets the standards for diplomatic recognition, what kind of standards do we have?

And in light of suspicions that North Korea manufactures goods in its concentration camps that it exports for hard currency, why should Kim Jong Il believe that he is entitled to normal trade relations with this country, in probable violation of the Tariff Act's prohibition on slave-made imports?

The title of a recent panel discussion at AEI I believe hit it on the nail. The various diplomatic efforts have succeed in making the world safer for Kim Jong Il and his inner circle.

To quote: Pyongyang has been able to suppress all internal dissent and remain the world's most repressive police state. It has also managed, without reprisal, to emerge as a declared nuclear weapons state and to test an atomic weapon. And since the start of the new century, North Korea has succeeded in extracting significantly larger economic subsidies from abroad for financing its operations of state. These "achievements" all augur ill for international security-but they may indeed make the world safer from the standpoint of Kim Jong Il and his ruling circle.

Since passage of the North Korean Human Rights Act, I have yet to see progress in these areas that I just outlined.

I was pleased to learn that my House colleagues, the chairman and ranking member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee has just introduced a bill reauthorizing the North Korean Human Rights Act.

In its findings, it articulates the problems faced by North Korean

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refugees and other issues I outlined in my statement. I applaud my house colleagues and I look forward to its swift passage in the House. I look forward to working with them to do the same here in the Senate and to get it the President's desk.

Everytime we allow a North Korean refugee to be sent back by China or fail to let them into the United States, we are making the world safer for...Kim Jong Il and his inner circle.

I have not seen a sincere and committed effort to make conditions safer for the North Korean refugees.

Until such time as I'm convinced that our State Department has carried out the provisions of the North Korean Human Rights Act in good faith, I will continue to place a hold on this nominee.

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