

Congressional Hearing

On Abduction of Foreign Citizens by North Korea

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At Least 12 Countries Affected

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members, thank you for giving me this precious opportunity to share my information and views on the North Korean abduction issue.

The Japanese government has officially recognized 11 cases involving 16 Japanese nationals who were abducted by North Korea. This figure, however, is just the tip of the iceberg.

Along with violent kidnap, a number of people seem to have been lured to North Korea and then held. Although it's hard to be certain, I estimate that over one hundred Japanese have been abducted.

In addition to these Japanese victims, there are numerous South Korean abductees, on whom Korean witnesses before this committee will later elaborate.

North Korean defectors have told us that in 1976 Kim Jong-il issued a secret order to use foreign nationals more systematically and thereby improve the quality of North Korean spy activities. He dubbed it "localization of spy education." Although abduction had been conducted consistently by the North, it was after this order that the kidnap operation went into high gear.

At least eleven Japanese, including thirteen-year-old Megumi Yokota, were abducted in 1977 and 1978. Five South Korean high school students were also abducted in 1977 and 1978.

Four young Lebanese women were also kidnapped in 1978. One of them is still being held in North Korea.

It was also confirmed that at least two Chinese women and one Thai woman were abducted by North Korea from Macau on the same night in 1978. All of them were in their early 20s.

U.S. Army deserter Charles Robert Jenkins, who is now living in Japan, told us a Romanian woman named Dona was also kidnapped and forced to live in North Korea.

The Lebanese women, after having managed to escape, testified that they had been sent to a North Korean spy camp and given indoctrination lectures together with physical training, including Judo, Taekwondo, Karate, and eavesdropping exercises, among others. They recalled there had been 28 young female trainees in the camp, including three French, three Italians, two Hollanders, and other Western European and Middle Eastern looking women (Lebanese newspaper, *El Nahar*, November 9, 1979).

The renowned South Korean actress Choi Un-hee, who was abducted from Hong Kong in January 1978 and managed to escape in 1986, testified that in North Korea she had once exchanged brief words with a Jordanian woman.

Ms. Choi Un-hee also had heard about a French abductee lured by a “good-looking North Korean man.” North Korean ex-agent Kim Hyon-hee told a similar story in her memoirs.

There is a case of five missing young women from Singapore in August 1978, four Singaporeans and a Malaysian, in which North Korean involvement is also highly suspected. Ms. Choi Un-hee said she had heard about the presence of Malaysian abductees.

It appears therefore that the countries affected by the North Korean abduction apparatus amount to at least 12: Japan, South Korea, Lebanon, China, Thailand, Romania, France, Italy, Holland, Jordan, Malaysia, and Singapore.

As this information becomes more widely available, I strongly urge those concerned -- governments, relatives and friends of missing persons -- to reexamine their cases in light of the North Korean connection if there is even a remote chance of its involvement. This is especially true for cases from 1977 and 1978 in which the missing persons were in their twenties or teenagers.

Objectives of Abduction

In attempting to recover Japanese missing persons I have also considered the question “Why do North Koreans abduct foreign citizens?” Six patterns emerge from the past cases. North Korea appears to abduct foreign citizens in order to:

- 1, eliminate hapless witnesses who happened to run into North Korean agents in action
- 2, steal victims’ identities and infiltrate agents back into the countries concerned
- 3, force abductees to teach their local language and customs to North Korean agents
- 4, brainwash them into secret agents
- 5, utilize abductees’ expertise or special skills
- 6, use abductees as spouses for unusual residents in North Korea, especially to lone foreigners such as defectors or other abductees

Needless to say, these six patterns are not mutually exclusive. In fact, “multiple-utilization” may be rather common.

Among these objectives, the first is old one and was consistently performed practice. Numbers 2, 3, and 4 derive from Kim Jong-il’s above mentioned secret order in 1976, and contributed to his “localization of spy education.” Actress Choi Un-hee’s case falls into Number 5. The last, Number 6, is, so to speak, a crime-generates-new-crime

category of deed.

Victim's Release as "Verifiable Renunciation of Terrorism"

Considerable effort has been invested to learn why Pyongyang has not released most of its abduction victims. Megumi Yokota and other Japanese abductees have been confirmed to be forced to teach their own local language and customs to North Korean agents. So, if released, they would be able to identify Pyongyang's agents operating in Japan and elsewhere.

This I believe is the principal reason why North Korea is refusing to release them. In other words, if North Korea makes a decision to stop terrorist training and withdraw all secret operatives and sleeper cells hiding in various places in the world, then it could release all their teachers -- abducted foreigners -- at once. The very fact that North Korea refuses to release these abductees is a sure sign that it has no intention of abandoning terrorism.

I think it is exactly the right approach to demand verifiable dismantlement of nuclear programs as a prerequisite for any financial aid to North Korea. By the same token, the "verifiable renunciation of terrorism" should also be demanded as a prerequisite for any financial aid. The release of the abductees is an indispensable factor in this renunciation process.

In short, so long as the abduction issue remains unresolved, we cannot help but assume that North Korea will not abandon its terrorist programs. We should act accordingly.

Children Abducted by North Korea

Megumi Yokota is not the only 13-year-old child abducted by North Korea. There is another 13-year-old victim, a Japanese boy named Takeshi Terakoshi.

Takeshi disappeared from a fishing boat along with his two uncles in 1963. According to a defector, the fishing boat was rammed by a North Korean spy ship in Japanese waters. North Koreans carried off the three Japanese fishermen to eliminate witnesses.

The incident was confirmed as a North Korean abduction case when one of the uncles managed to send a letter to Japanese relatives in 1987.

Takeshi's mother at first worked hard with other victims' families to recover her son. But Takeshi was forced to declare he had not been abducted but instead "rescued" by a North Korean ship and that he is living "happily" in North Korea. Accordingly, his

mother's attitude changed and she now asks the Japanese government not to include her son's name on the victims list.

The mother has been allowed occasionally to visit Takeshi at his apartment in Pyongyang. She is obviously afraid of antagonizing the North Korean authority and of being denied further entry into the country.

In my opinion, the Japanese government should have officially recognized Takeshi and his two uncles as abduction victims many years ago. Not doing so sent the wrong message to North Korea. The North Korean ship "rescuing" Takeshi is just a ridiculous story. Even if it were true, which it is not, rescuing a 13-year-old boy and not notifying his parents for several decades is nothing but kidnapping.

Three sons of one of Takeshi's uncles, who is claimed to be dead by North Korea, are active members of the Abductees Families Association and have demanded that the Japanese government officially recognize the case as abduction.

The U.S. House resolution condemning North Korean abduction as "acts of terrorism and gross violation of human rights," which passed the House of Representatives on July 11, 2005, rightly referred to Takeshi's case as follows:

Whereas North Korean agents have abducted children, causing unimaginable anguish to parents who live decades with the uncertainty of what has happened to their child, as in the cases of Takeshi Terakoshi, a thirteen-year-old boy kidnapped from a fishing boat with his two uncles. . .

This resolution has given us great encouragement. Here, I want to say Thank You again.

I have pointed out earlier that at least five South Korean high school students were also abducted by North Korea. There are several suspected cases involving Japanese high school students too. In my opinion, it is a mistake to assume that North Korea's abduction of children is limited only to the Japanese and the South Koreans.

Marriages with a Hidden Purpose: US Deserters and Abducted Women

Charles Robert Jenkins, who deserted to North Korea in January 1965 when he was a U.S. Army Sergeant, testified after his repatriation to Japan in 2004 that he shared his harsh life in North Korea, on an on-and-off basis, with three other alleged U.S. Army deserters: Pfc. James Joseph Dresnok (August 1962), Pvt. Larry Allen Abshier (May 1962) and Cpl. Jerry Wayne Parrish (December 1963).

All four American deserters married foreign abductees in North Korea.

Ms. Hitomi Soga, who was a young woman when she was abducted from Japan, married Mr. Jenkins. She gave birth to two daughters who are now studying hard and enjoying campus life in Japan but Hitomi's mother, who was abducted along with her, is still missing. North Korea has claimed that her mother's entry into the North had not been documented and they say they knew nothing about her. Their claim is entirely without credibility. Hitomi herself was a victim of abduction and is still the daughter of another abduction victim.

Ms. Siham Shraiteh, a Lebanese, who was deceived by a fictitious job offer in Japan and taken to North Korea in 1978, married Mr. Parrish and gave birth to three sons who are living in North Korea. Mr. Parrish died in August 1997.

Ms. Anocha Panjoy, a Thai who was kidnapped from Macau in 1978, married Mr. Abshier. Mr. Abshier died in 1983. Several years later, Ms. Anocha said to Mr. Jenkins that she was about to remarry a German. That was the last time Mr. Jenkins saw her.

A Romanian woman named Dona married Mr. Dresnok. Dona told Mr. Jenkins the following story just before her death.

Her mother was a Russian and her father a Romanian Army officer. She had once married an Italian. After divorce, she entered an Italian art school using her alimony to pay for it.

Subsequently another Italian man approached her and asked her to go to Hong Kong via Russia and North Korea to do some preparatory work for her possible solo art exhibition. She was then left stranded in North Korea and the Italian man disappeared.

Dona died from lung cancer in January 1997. As she had asked not to be buried in North Korean soil, Mr. Dresnok had her body cremated. Mr. Dresnok then remarried a woman named Dada, who is half North Korean and half Togolese.

Mr. Jenkins has suggested the North's spymasters would quite probably consider using the children of foreign couples and children of mixed race as secret agents, especially for work around U.S. military bases overseas where mixed race marriage is not uncommon.

Mr. Jenkins said that he felt depressed when North Korean authorities ordered his daughters to enter the Pyongyang Foreign Language College. As you may be aware, Kim Hyon-hee, a perpetrator of the Korean Airline bombing in 1987, was picked out as a secret agent by the authorities when she was a student of that college.

This and other evidence indicates that women abducted by North Korea seem to be tormented by a double agony. First, as a young adult, each woman's promising life in

her own country is suddenly destroyed by the kidnapping. Then these victims become the mothers of children who, in turn, are forced to become secret agents of North Korea, the regime she detests.

Beijing Obstructs Rescue Efforts

Beijing continues to hunt down hapless North Korean refugees and drive them back to Kim Jong-il's torture chambers in violation of the U.N. Refugee Convention, of which it is a signatory. Among those forcibly sent back, there must have been, are, and will be abducted foreign nationals, their family members, and people who have valuable information on abductees' whereabouts.

So, I have to say that the Chinese authorities are systematically obstructing our efforts to recover abducted victims.

Moreover, Beijing appears to make no effort to rescue its own abducted nationals. Let me give you an example.

Two Macau residents, 20 year old Ms. Hong Leng-ieng and 22 year old Ms. So Mio-chun, were abducted by North Korean agents on July 2, 1978. Macau was a Portuguese colony at the time but fell back into Beijing's control in 1999. The two abductees therefore are Chinese nationals now. Their family members also are Chinese nationals.

My colleagues and I were able to confirm this case as abduction through various interviews. For example, South Korean actress Choi Un-hee who was kidnapped from Hong Kong in January 1978 and succeeded to escape in 1986, testified that she temporarily lived with Ms. Hong Leng-ieng at a so-called "guest house" in Pyongyang.

Ms. Choi Un-hee remembered that Ms. Hong's Christian name was "Maria." We asked family members of Ms. Hong about this name. They knew that she had baptized as a Catholic but did not know her Christian name. They ran into the church to which she had belonged and found out that her baptized name in fact was "Maria."

Ms. Choi Un-hee said that in Pyongyang, Ms. Hong had been forced to teach Chinese language.

Our organization tried to inform the staff of the Chinese Embassy in Tokyo about the abduction status of their citizen but they refused to meet. Therefore, we mailed written materials on the case to the Chinese Embassy. There has been no response at all. They have just ignored us.

Beijing is not only obstructing rescue efforts of abducted foreigners by sending refugees back to North Korea but it is cold-bloodedly deserting its own nationals held in North Korea. Is this kind of regime qualified to hold the Olympic Games?

Were the world degenerate enough to adopt a refugee hunt as an official sport, China would be the most suitable place to hold the event. And, no doubt, team China would win the Gold Medal. But common sense tells us that Beijing is not an appropriate place for the Olympic Games so long as it continues to brutally hunt down North Korean refugees.

Referring to North Korea, it has been said that a system where you can't live but you cannot leave is the definition of hell. Yes, it is, and Beijing is the co-manager of that hell. Chinese communist leaders should be ashamed of themselves.

Regime Change through Economic Squeeze

I've long since come to the conclusion that regime change is the only way to resolve the abduction issue, and the nuclear issue and missile issue, for that matter. Feckless half measures won't work.

The question, therefore, is how to achieve regime change.

There is no shortcut to victory. In my view an economic squeeze is the key. In this, not only Pyongyang should be pressured, but also Beijing.

To this end, the financial sanctions launched by the United States last September are exactly the right move. Those sanctions are targeting, among others, Chinese banks joining hands with Pyongyang. It is my hope that the United States will ratchet up these measures and that other countries will follow the U.S. lead.

The Japanese government, under the strong leadership of Chief Cabinet Secretary Shinzo Abe, recently has strengthened economic pressure against North Korea using the various tools at hand. This has been encouraging.

Two years ago, the Japanese National Diet passed two important bills. The first is the Revised Foreign Exchange and Foreign Trade Law that enables the government to halt trade and monetary remittances to any country if the government judges that "it is necessary for the maintenance of the peace and safety of our country."

The second is a bill that would allow the government to prevent specified vessels from entering Japanese ports. Japan now can ban the entry not only of North Korean ships, but any ship, say a Chinese or even a Japanese flag vessel which stops at North Korean ports, if the Prime Minister in his discretion decides to do so.

In my opinion, the implementation of this powerful tool is long overdue. Now is the time for an all-out economic squeeze.

Do I have a message for Kim Jong-il? No, I have none. He is hopeless. I just want him to fall into the ash heap of history as soon as possible.

But I have a message for the people surrounding him: Eliminate Kim Jong-il and secure the safety and freedom of the abductees, their family members, their friends, their friends' friends. That is, for all except Kim Jong-il and his henchmen. Then North Koreans can expect not only the lifting of sanctions but also tremendous financial aid from all over the world.

Thank you.