

07SEOUL1576: XXXXXXXXXXXX SHARES IDEAS ON DPRK

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SUBJECT: XXXXXXXXXXXX SHARES IDEAS ON DPRK
INTERACTION

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C)XXXXXXXXXXXX Arranging an Eric Clapton concert in Pyongyang could also be useful, he said, given KIM Jong-il's second son's devotion to the rock legend. END SUMMARY.

XXXXXXXXXXXX

¶2. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX

DOING BUSINESS IN THE DPRK

¶3. (C) For an outsider to get anything done in the DPRK, XXXXXXXXXXXX advised, it is necessary to get the DPRK's various institutions to cooperate. Each institution seems to have veto power, but none has the power to push anything forward. XXXXXXXXXXXX the only organizations that can really deliver are the military, which does not talk to anybody, or the

Red Cross. XXXXXXXXXXXXX

DIVIDED FAMILIES INITIATIVE

¶4. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXX advocated in favor of USG involvement in facilitating the reunification of Korean-American families divided by the Korean War. XXXXXXXXXXXXX said that currently two groups organize these visits for Korean-Americans. The first is Compatriots United, which has arranged thousands of reunions. However, the group is controlled by the DPRK's Overseas Compatriots Committee and extorts a tremendous amount of money from desperate families to arrange the visits. Families seeking to participate must pay USD 300 to apply and submit comprehensive personal and financial information. If selected, the families are forced to pay for unwanted sightseeing excursions in North Korea. Before they are finally able to see their relatives, which is always just hours before their departing flight, they are often told that the relatives had to travel to the meeting place by taxi and owed several thousand dollars in fare. As XXXXXXXXXXXXX explained, these are desperate, old people who would pay anything.

After the trip, the participants typically get repeated correspondence from the North Korean government asking for money to assist the family members, who are sometimes falsely alleged to be ill.

¶5. (C) The other group active in family reunions is Pyongtong in Los Angeles. XXXXXXXXXXXXX said that the group recently arranged for 15 persons to visit family members in the DPRK. However, the DPRK canceled the arrangement after the group went to the press. Pyongyang ultimately intervened and instructed the Compatriots Committee to help facilitate the visit. Thus, Pyongtong was able to arrange a visit for six people a few weeks ago.

¶6. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXXX said that North Korea would not run such an exploitative system if the United States government were involved in the process. There is a reluctance, he said, for Korean-Americans to pursue family reunions because they do not want to divulge their personal information to the DPRK and they do not want the North Koreans to milk them for

money before, during and after the reunion. The USG could at least volunteer to serve as a conduit for correspondence between these families and North Korea to prevent the DPRK from learning the home addresses and bank accounts of participants. The DPRK might be willing to accept this structure because it badly wants a relationship with Washington.

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XXXXXXXXXXXXX

¶8. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX did not see hope for inter-Korean engagement, despite the widely acclaimed railroad test. “North Koreans have no intention of dealing with (South Koreans). The South Koreans really think they can help. They don’t understand that North Korea is sealed.”

BOOK ERIC CLAPTON

¶9. (C) XXXXXXXXXXXX passed on the suggestion from his North Korean interlocutors that the USG arrange for Eric Clapton to perform a concert in Pyongyang. As KIM Jong-il’s second son, KIM Jong-chol, is reported to be a great fan, the performance could be an opportunity to build good will.

VERSHBOW

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