

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2009 12:59 PM
To: H
Subject: Re: Mr.Yoo

----- Original Message -----

From: Doug Band [redacted]
To: Mills, Cheryl D; Abedin, Huma
Sent: Thu Aug 13 10:29:42 2009
Subject: Fw: Mr.Yoo

B6

----- Original Message -----

From: Lisa Ling [redacted]
To: Doug Band
Sent: Thu Aug 13 10:28:52 2009
Subject: Mr.Yoo

This is huge news. It was presumed that he was dead because he was never allowed a consular visit or phone calls. NK went radio silent on him. Let's hope a return to 6 party talks is next. Go 42!

North Korea frees detained South Korea worker

By KWANG-TAE KIM (AP) – 2 hours ago

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea has freed a South Korean worker detained for months in the communist country, officials said Thursday, brightening prospects for improved relations on the peninsula.

The release came days after Hyundai Group Chairwoman Hyun Jung-eun traveled to Pyongyang in an effort to secure the employee's freedom, and a week after the isolated regime freed two U.S. journalists sentenced to 12 years of hard labor for entering the North illegally in March. That release followed a surprise visit by former President Bill Clinton, who held talks with North Korean leader Kim Jong Il.

The 44-year-old technician, surnamed Yoo, worked at an industrial zone in the North's border city of Kaesong, where about 110 South Korean-run factories employ about 40,000 North Korean workers. He was detained in March for allegedly denouncing the North's political system.

Though one of the few joint projects still running, the complex's viability has come under questions in recent months as the North refused to release Yoo and demanded a massive increase in payments and recent at the industrial park. It now has only a skeletal South Korean staff.

Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-joo said Yoo — an employee of the Hyundai Group's North Korean business arm, Hyundai Asan — had been released and was expected to return to South Korea later Thursday.

"It's fortunate that Yoo is returning to his family, though it's rather late," presidential spokesman Lee Dong-kwan said in a statement. He added that the South Korean government will maintain a "consistent policy" toward North Korea.

Lee did not elaborate, but South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's government has taken a hard-line approach toward North Korea, and the North responded by cutting off most ties and halting or curtailing key joint projects except for the Kaesong complex.

A council made up of South Korean companies operating in Kaesong welcomed Yoo's release and expressed hope it would "improve frozen South-North relations and revitalize" the troubled complex.

The North, however, is still holding four South Korean fishermen whose boat was seized last month after straying accidentally into northern waters. North Korea told the South earlier Thursday that its investigation into the case is still continuing, Unification Ministry spokesman Chun Hae-sung told reporters. No details were given.

Ahead of the news of Yoo's release Thursday, about 100 demonstrators gathered in central Seoul to demand the release of the detained worker and the fishermen. Some burned a North Korean flag and photos of Kim.

Hyundai has poured hundreds of millions of dollars into the industrial zone and a joint tourist project promoted by more liberal South Korean governments in the past. But renewed tension between the rivals has seen a suspension of trips to the North by South Korean tourists and a dramatic reduction in the number of South Koreans working in the industrial zone.

The two Koreas technically remain at war since the 1950-53 Korean conflict ended in a cease-fire, not a peace treaty.

Associated Press writer Hyung-jin Kim contributed to this report.