

## **North Korea Decides to Indict 2 U.S. Reporters**

The New York Times

April 24, 2009 Friday, The New York Times on the Web

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**Section:** Section ; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg.

**Length:** 418 words

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**Dateline:** SEOUL

### **Body**

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**North Korea** said Friday that it had **decided** to **indict** two American journalists who have been detained for more than five weeks on charges of illegally entering the country and committing "hostile acts."

"Our related agency has completed its investigation of the American journalists," **North Korea's** state-run news agency, KCNA, reported. "It has formally **decided** to put them on trial based on confirmed criminal data."

The **reporters**, Laura Ling and Euna Lee, work for Current TV, a San Francisco-based media company founded by Al Gore, the former vice president. They were arrested by the **North** Korean military on March 17 on the border between China and **North Korea**. They had been in China reporting on the **North** Korean refugees who fled hunger at home and were living in hiding in China.

The news agency did not say specifically what charges the journalists will face. But **North Korea** officials said on March 31 that the **reporters** would be **indicted** on charges of "illegal entry" and perpetrating "hostile acts" against the Communist state.

Their indictment comes amid high tension between **North Korea** and the **United States** after the **North** launched a long-range rocket on April 5. The **United States** pressed the United Nations Security Council to call for tightened sanctions on the **North**.

In return, Pyongyang told the United Nations' nuclear monitors last week to leave the country and vowed to quit six-nation talks on dismantling its nuclear weapons facilities. It threatened, too, to restart a plant that makes bomb-grade plutonium.

The **United States** does not have diplomatic relations with **North Korea**, but a Swedish diplomat based in **North Korea** has met with the two American journalists on Washington's behalf. They are being held in Pyongyang, the capital.

After Ms. Ling and Ms. Lee were arrested under circumstances that are still unclear, they appear to have become part of the political standoff between Pyongyang and Washington, analysts said, with **North Korea** likely to use their trial as political leverage against the **United States**.

**North Korea** has said that it would allow the **reporters** consular access and treat them according to international law. Amnesty International has said it doubted that they will receive a fair trial, given the **North** Korean judicial system's lack of independence or transparency.

**North Korea** also has detained a South Korean worker in a joint industrial complex in the **North** for almost a month on charges of denouncing the **North** Korean regime.

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## Classification

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**Language:** ENGLISH

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** INDICTMENTS (91%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (90%); NUCLEAR WEAPONS (90%); JOURNALISM (90%); WRITERS (90%); UNITED NATIONS (90%); NEWS REPORTING (90%); ARRESTS (89%); REFUGEES (78%); TALKS & MEETINGS (77%); INVESTIGATIONS (77%); INTERNATIONAL LAW (76%); TYPES OF GOVERNMENT (74%); MILITARY WEAPONS (74%); HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS (73%); DIPLOMATIC SERVICES (73%); FOREIGN RELATIONS (70%); EMBASSIES & CONSULATES (70%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (65%)

**Industry:** NUCLEAR WEAPONS (90%); WRITERS (90%); NEWS REPORTING (90%); MILITARY WEAPONS (74%)

**Person:** AL GORE (54%)

**Geographic:** PYONGYANG, KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF (92%); CALIFORNIA, USA (79%); UNITED STATES (98%); KOREA, DEMOCRATIC PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF (97%); CHINA (93%); KOREA, REPUBLIC OF (79%)

**Load-Date:** April 24, 2009