

## FORCED ABDUCTION BY NORTH KOREA NO FARCE

- Many citizens in our country were infuriated by North Korea's recent attack against Sony but may be unaware that a U.S. citizen in the prime of his life is most likely a prisoner at the "mercy" of this same foreign power. David Sneddon disappeared in China on August 14, 2004 without a trace. According to the U.S. State Department, he remains the only U.S. citizen ever to disappear in China after U.S.-Chinese relations were normalized under the Nixon Administration.
- Chinese officials have reported there is no evidence that David was a victim of violent crime, or a resident in a local hospital, prison, or mental institution when he disappeared. No attempt has been made to use David's passport since he went missing, and his bank account remains untouched. China theorized David may have drowned by falling into the river from the trail in Tiger Leaping Gorge, but multiple witnesses confirmed meeting David seventy miles beyond the gorge in Shangri-La, as recorded by David's family members and in official U.S. Embassy documents.
- David had every intention of returning to the United States. He had already put money down on student housing, scheduled his law school entrance exam and even set an appointment with his orthodontist. He planned business meetings and a visit with his brother on his way back to the United States. In his last e-mail to his mother before leaving by bus to hike Tiger Leaping Gorge, David concluded: "I am having a great time here, but nonetheless am excited to come home."
- Law enforcement officials have noted it is highly unusual for an individual to vanish without leaving a trace, but the circumstances of David's case are consistent with cases of persons who were abducted by professionals. Multiple highly-plausible theories have been advanced in recent years by NGO's, investigative journalists and subject matter experts indicating that David was most likely professionally abducted by North Korea.
- In 2002, North Korean officials acknowledged that its government has carried out a policy since the 1970's of abducting foreign citizens and holding them captive in North Korea for the purpose of training its intelligence and military personnel in critical language and culture skills to infiltrate foreign nations.
- Tensions between the United States and North Korea were dramatically heightened in the summer of 2004, when David disappeared, in part due to recent passage by the U.S. Congress of the North Korean Human Rights Act to increase U.S. aid to refugees fleeing North Korea. In official response, the North Korean regime warned the U.S. to "drop its hostile policy," "stop its rash acts," "ponder over the grave consequences to be entailed by its extremely hostile moves to isolate" the North Korean regime that "will certainly make non-governmental organizations in some countries pay" for aiding refugees.

- The Yunnan Province is regarded by regional experts as an area frequently trafficked by North Korean refugees and their support networks, and China allows North Korean agents to operate throughout the region to repatriate refugees. In fact, the number of North Korean agents in Yunnan was unusually high in August 2004 because a few weeks earlier a prominent North Korean political defector had been caught in the province.
- David spoke Korean to the Korean-speaking Yak Bar restaurant owner in an area of China heavily trafficked by refugees fleeing North Korea with aid from underground railroad operatives. These operatives often meet refugees in local establishments (such as restaurants) and are likely skilled in the Korean and/or Chinese languages. These facts may have inadvertently cast on David the suspicion of local Chinese police whose headquarters was located a short walk from the Yak Bar where David ate in Shangri-La.
- David carried his copy of “The Book of Mormon” in his fanny pack, which may have led local police to suspect he was an American missionary participating in the Asian Underground Railroad to aid North Korean refugees and make converts to Christianity, rather than the student tourist David’s history, travel plans, and e-mails show him to be.
- David Sneddon’s disappearance fits a known pattern often seen in the abduction of foreigners by North Korea, including the fact that David disappeared the day before North Korea’s Liberation Day patriotic national holiday, and North Korea has a demonstrated history of provocations near dates it deems historically significant.
- Because North Korea had just publicly released its English-language instructor, U.S. captive Charles Jenkins, due to international pressure, North Korean agents may have seen an opportunity to curry favor with their Supreme Leader by delivering a linguistically-talented young American to replace Jenkins and teach North Korea’s intelligence operatives. David spoke fluent Korean and was skilled in Mandarin Chinese.
- A well-reputed Japanese non-profit specializing in North Korean abductions shared with the U.S. its expert analysis in 2012 about information it stated was received “from a reliable source” that an American university student largely matching David Sneddon’s description was taken from China by North Korean agents in August 2004. The experts who obtained the information told David’s family the source has “never been wrong.”
- The “reliable source” most likely had connections to the Chinese Ministry of State Security (MSS, China’s joint equivalent to the FBI/CIA) and told experts in Japan that an American male university student age 23 or 24 who recently studied in China was handed over by MSS agents to North Korean agents after being detained one month in mid-August to mid-September 2004 when the MSS received news the “JAIS” was coming to look for him. “JAIS” is a phonetic equivalent to the American name of James, David’s

brother who traveled to China in mid-September 2004 with his Dad and brother to try and find David.

- A one-month detainment of David would have violated China's treaty agreement to inform the U.S. within four days of detaining a U.S. citizen. It is possible that Chinese agents (who have an established record of working hand-in-hand with North Korean agents to repatriate North Korean refugees throughout China and certainly in Yunnan) saw a convenient way to cover up China's treaty violation by handing David over to North Korean agents after the MSS discovered David was not an operative on the Asian underground railroad, but in fact just an American tourist with unique language skills.
- In 2014, Japan's cabinet-level Minister of Abduction was quoted as telling a reporter that "he and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe believe [the] information is entirely credible," and stated "it is most probable that David Sneddon is still residing in North Korea... but I do not think that the United States is working fast enough to collect evidence." The Wall Street Journal similarly reported in 2013 that such experts concluded "It is most probable that a U.S. national has been abducted to North Korea," and "There is a strong possibility that North Korea kidnapped the American."
- In 2011, Chuck Downs, then-Executive Director of the Committee for Human Rights in North Korea (HRNK), studied David's case and noted that it matched the pattern often seen in abduction cases he'd studied while editing a groundbreaking report: "Taken! North Korea's Criminal Abduction of Citizens of Other Countries," cited at least a dozen times by the United Nations in its recent report of major human rights violations by North Korea. Chuck discussed David's case while testifying before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in 2011 during hearings on North Korea's human rights violations.
- The theories on David's likely abduction by North Korea at times work together and at times diverge in details, but it is clear many thoughtful and intelligent experts are convinced David Sneddon was most likely abducted by North Korean agents. He could be alive in North Korea and potentially recoverable by U.S. or international efforts.
- In the best-case scenario of North Korean captivity, David Sneddon (now age 35) is being used as a language trainer in a North Korean intelligence compound, and his movements, communication with his family and other basic freedoms are non-existent or highly restricted. In the worst case scenario, David has become part of the dreaded gulag frequently described by the United Nations and human rights activists as the worst in the world. Even if David were living in a golden palace (highly doubtful in North Korea) it would simply be a gilded cage taking away his God-given freedoms and those rights guaranteed to citizens by the United States Constitution.