



Backgrounder

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RESPONDING TO THE LOOMING NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR THREAT

INTRODUCTION

North Korea's nuclear weapons program is the gravest threat to peace in Asia. With these weapons, North Korea's threat to the Republic of Korea (ROK) would increase enormously and North Korea would be able to threaten Japan. North Korea also could begin to traffic in nuclear weapons technology with radical regimes opposed to the United States and its allies. This is the critical year to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program. By mid-year Pyongyang may be capable of reprocessing the plutonium needed to make a nuclear bomb, and by mid-1993 Pyongyang could be able to build a bomb.

To prompt Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program, Washington and Seoul have made several nuclear and military concessions. Late last year, Washington unilaterally removed all nuclear weapons from South Korea and agreed to open U.S. military bases in South Korea to inspection by the North. Last November 8, Seoul pledged to be nuclear-free. And then, this January 7, Washington and Seoul agreed to cancel this year's "Team Spirit," a large scale military exercise which the U.S. and ROK have been conducting since 1976.

Responding to Overtures. Increasingly shunned by its former communist allies and patrons, like the former Soviet Union, and isolated in the international arena by South Korea's diplomacy, North Korea has had little choice but to start responding to overtures from Seoul and Washington. On December 31, North Korea agreed with South Korea to ban possession or development of nuclear weapons, and allow inspection of suspected nuclear weapons-related sites. The North also agreed to form with Seoul a "Joint Nuclear Control Committee" by March 19 to oversee such inspections. And the North has indicated that by the end of this month it will sign a nuclear safeguard agreement that will allow inspection of nuclear sites by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Pyongyang previously had refused to sign such a safeguard agreement even though it was required to do so by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty that it signed in 1985.

Problems Remain. These are all encouraging developments. Yet potentially serious problems remain. The December 31 agreement is vague and fails to commit Pyongyang to specific measures. North Korea's 41-year record of hostility toward South Korea, terrorism, internal repression, and its 1.1 million-man armed forces, are cause for continued great caution. The example of Iraq, moreover, demonstrates how early nuclear weapons programs can be hidden from the IAEA. Now that the negotiations between North and South Korea regarding inspection of nuclear sites have started, Seoul and Washington have until mid-year to assess Pyongyang's commitment to allowing inspections to proceed. In addition to inspections, the U.S. and South Korea rightly demand that North Korea destroy its nuclear weapons-making capability. If by the end of this year both Washington and Seoul determine that North Korea has not started to dismantle its nuclear weapons-producing capability, then both must conclude that Pyongyang never intended to honor the December 31 agreement. Seoul and Washington then must be prepared to take diplomatic and economic measures—and to evaluate whether military measures would be useful—to compel North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities.

American and South Korean determination to halt Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program is understandable. A nuclear-armed North Korea may choose to blackmail South Korea and Japan for political and economic concessions. A nuclear-armed North Korea would create pressure on Seoul and Tokyo to consider obtaining nuclear weapons. With nuclear weapons, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung, or his successor, not only could delay the peaceful unification of the Korean Peninsula, but also could spark another Korean War.

A nuclear-armed North Korea also would pose a direct threat to U.S. security. Pyongyang is building long-range missiles that in the future could be nuclear-armed, and perhaps reach the U.S. Pyongyang already has sold *Scud* missiles to Iran, Libya, and Syria, and it might also eventually traffic in nuclear weapons technology with such radical regimes.

Generous Inducements. Washington and Seoul have been generous in offering Pyongyang political and economic inducements to curtail its nuclear weapons program. South Korea, for example, on December 13 signed with North Korea a broad agreement to improve cultural, political, and economic relations. Washington is linking improvement of its diplomatic ties with Pyongyang and the easing of its 41-year trade embargo on North Korea to the dismantling of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program. Tokyo says it will not normalize relations with Pyongyang until it ends its nuclear weapons program. Pyongyang surely wants the trade and aid that would follow normalization of relations with Tokyo. So far, only Beijing refuses to press Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program.

The U.S., South Korea, and its allies are running out of time to end the North Korean nuclear threat. By next year, North Korea may be completing the components for a nuclear weapon. America thus must act now. To prevent North Korea from becoming a nuclear power, the Bush Administration should devise a program that includes:

- ◆ A statement from the Bush Administration that makes clear to North Korea that it must demonstrate that it is destroying its nuclear weapons-making facilities by the end of 1992.
- ◆ An offer to upgrade U.S. diplomatic relations with North Korea if, by this spring, North Korea allows inspection of its nuclear facilities by South Korea or the International Atomic Energy Agency.
- ◆ Delaying full U.S. diplomatic and trade relations with North Korea until it has dismantled its nuclear weapons facilities.
- ◆ A greater and more imaginative effort to convince Beijing to pressure North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program.
- ◆ Maintaining 37,000 of the 40,000 American troops now based in South Korea to demonstrate U.S. resolve to defend the ROK.
- ◆ A program of graduated political, economic, and military actions to be taken if Pyongyang does not begin to dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities by the end of this year.

PYONGYANG'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS POTENTIAL

Pyongyang denies it has nuclear intentions. On December 19, Representative Steven Solarz, the New York Democrat, during a visit to Pyongyang, was told by North Korean leader Kim Il-sung: "We are not intending to produce nuclear weapons. We have no capacity to produce nuclear weapons, nor do we have the money for that purpose."¹

American intelligence sources, however, dispute this. They estimate that North Korea may be able to produce a nuclear weapon by mid-1993.² This would be the culmination of a nuclear weapons program which began in the late 1970s, building on a nuclear power research program Pyongyang started in the mid 1950s.³ The best-known North Korean nuclear weapons research facility is near the city of Yongbyon, about sixty miles north of Pyongyang. This facility has been observed by U.S. intelligence aircraft and satellites. It has about 3,000 scientists and researchers. That Yongbyon facilities are circled by anti-aircraft defenses points to the conclusion that it is a nuclear weapons research facility.

Yongbyon has one small 30-megawatt atomic reactor built between 1980 and 1987. It can produce about fourteen pounds of plutonium annually—enough for one nuclear bomb every one or two years. Since 1984, a second, 50-200 megawatt reactor has been under construction near Yongbyon. When operational, perhaps as early as next year, it could produce 36 to 100 pounds of plutonium annually—enough for two to five

1 Steven R. Weissman, "Leader of North Korea Denies Atom Arms Plan," *New York Times*, December 20, 1991, p. A14.

2 Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Welcomes Korea's Nuclear Accord," *Washington Post*, January 1, 1992, p. 1.

3 Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., "North Korea's Nuclear Program," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, September 1991, p. 404; Leonard S. Spector and Jacqueline R. Smith, "North Korea: The Next Nuclear Nightmare?" *Arms Control Today*, March 1991.

bombs. More ominous is the construction in Yongbyon of the kind of reprocessing plant needed to turn the plutonium produced by the reactors into a nuclear explosive. This plant may be operational by the middle of this year; it would allow Pyongyang to build a nuclear weapon within one year.

What is even more worrisome, much of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, as has been the case with Iraq, may be unseen. Last September, North Korean diplomat Ko Young-hwan, who defected to South Korea last May, while stationed in the Congo, revealed for the first time the existence of an underground nuclear research facility built during the 1960s near Backchon, about sixty miles north of Pyongyang and southwest of Yongbyon.⁴ Another North Korean defector, Kim Chong-min, who obtained asylum in 1988 while in Western Europe, helped supply materials to Yongbyon. He has said that he heard that beginning in 1987 a small plutonium reprocessing facility began producing about thirty pounds of weapons-grade plutonium annually.⁵

North Korea has been developing an effective means of delivering nuclear weapons: ballistic missiles based on the Soviet *Scud* design. It is estimated that North Korea annually produces about fifty *Scud-B* missiles, with a 150-mile range.⁶ North Korea has sold *Scuds* to Iran, Libya, and Syria, and has helped Iran build a *Scud* production facility. Pyongyang is developing long-range variants of the *Scud*. The *Scud-C*, which was tested last year, has a range of about 250 miles—enough to hit most targets in South Korea.⁷ Libya reportedly is funding the development of a 600-mile range *Scud-D* in exchange for North Korean assistance in building a *Scud* production plant in Libya.⁸ A 600-mile range missile could hit Japan. With enough money, North Korea might build missiles with even greater range.

South Korea's Military

Total Armed Forces:
750,000 men

Army

Troops: 650,000 men

Tanks: 1,550

Armored Personnel

Carriers: 2,080

Artillery: 4,240

Mortars: 5,300

Navy

Submarines: 4

Destroyers: 9

Frigates: 26

Patrol/Attack Craft: 83

Anti-submarine Aircraft: 24

Air Force

Combat Aircraft: 405

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1991-1992*.

Heritage InfoChart

4 "North Korea Will Succumb To Global Change in 5 Yrs.," *The Korea Times*, September 14, 1991, p. 1.

5 "Defector Says North Produced Plutonium in 1987," *Sekye Ilbo*, October 30, 1991, p. 1, in *FBIS-East Asia*, October 30, 1991, p. 18.

6 *Asia-Pacific Defense Reporter*, April, 1991, p. 24.

7 "North Korea test fires 'Scud C'," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, October 12, 1991, p. 651.

8 Elmo and James Zumwalt, "Israel's missile plight," *Australia-Israel Review*, August 7-20, 1991.

WHY NORTH KOREA WANTS NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Kim Il-sung may have several reasons for acquiring nuclear weapons. **First**, he may suffer from the illusion that nuclear weapons are the ultimate means to preserve his Stalinist communist system. Kim's determination to preserve North Korean totalitarianism also is illustrated by reports that Kim plans later this year to pass the leadership of North Korea to his son, Kim Jong-il. The younger Kim was given command of the armed forces last December 24.

Second, Kim may view nuclear weapons as means to press the U.S. to withdraw all its military forces from South Korea. Last October and December, for example, North Korea, in exchange for allowing inspection of its nuclear-related facilities, demanded: the end of the U.S. "nuclear umbrella" protecting the ROK; the end to U.S.-ROK military exercises that use equipment capable of carrying nuclear weapons; the end to flights over North Korea by U.S. aircraft and to port visits to South Korea by U.S. ships capable of carrying nuclear weapons; and the total withdrawal of American troops from Korea.⁹

Third, Pyongyang might view nuclear weapons as a means of increasing its prestige among other radical states.

Fourth, nuclear-related sales could become a source of quick cash for the limping North Korean economy.

For Kim, nuclear weapons also may replace the security guarantees formerly provided by its traditional allies. Pyongyang-Moscow relations steadily have worsened as South Korean President Roh Tae-woo's 1988 "Northern Policy" has led to improved Seoul-Moscow relations. Seoul and Moscow, in fact, established full diplomatic relations in September 1990. Last year, Moscow ended shipments of advanced weapons to North Korea and pressed Pyongyang to repay about \$4.7 billion in debts. The new Russian government, of course, almost surely will reevaluate the 1961 Soviet defense treaty with Pyongyang.¹⁰ China also has cut its aid to North Korea, while improving

North Korea's Military

Total Armed Forces:
1.1 million men

Army

Total Troops: 1 million men
Tanks: 3,500
Armored Personnel Carriers: 4,200
Artillery: 8,100
Mortars: 11,000

Navy

Submarines: 22
Frigates: 3
Patrol/Attack Craft: 360

Air Force

Combat Aircraft: 732

Source: International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1991-1992*.

Heritage InfoChart

⁹ Steven R. Weisman, "North Korea Adds Barriers to A-Plant Inspections," *New York Times*, October 24, 1991, p. A11; "Spokesman Gives News Briefing," *Pyongyang Korean Central Broadcasting Network*, December 11, 1991, in *FBIS-East Asia*, December 11, 1991, p. 13.

¹⁰ "Soviets Said Stopping Weapons Shipments to North," *Chungang Ilbo*, October 30, 1991, p. 1, in *FBIS-East Asia*, October 30, 1991, p. 18; "Russia To Reexamine Defense Treaty With DPRK," *Seoul KBS-1 Radio*, December 28,

relations with South Korea. On December 20 Seoul and Beijing signed a trade accord expected to increase their two-way trade to about \$6 billion a year.

THE CASE FOR HALTING NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

North Korea's nuclear weapons program threatens peace in Northeast Asia and may eventually pose a direct threat to America and its allies. Long-range North Korean missiles eventually could strike the U.S. Pyongyang's willingness to sell *Scud* missiles and missile production technology to radical regimes opposed to the U.S. raises the possibility that it may also consider selling nuclear technology or nuclear weapons to these regimes. North Korea is believed to have had limited nuclear-related cooperation with Egypt, and with radical states like Libya and Syria. And there are greater fears regarding potential nuclear cooperation with Iran. North Korea is believed to have helped Iran with uranium mining, but it is unknown if cooperation extends to nuclear weapons.¹¹

Nuclear weapons added to North Korea's 1.1 million-man armed forces would give the North a decisive advantage over South Korea's 650,000-man military. The presence of nuclear weapons in North Korea might prompt the U.S. or South Korea to consider a surgical airstrike against Pyongyang's nuclear facilities. Such a strike might lead to retaliation, which could escalate into war. Short of war, Kim Il-sung may use any political leverage from his nuclear arsenal to perpetuate the Cold War division of the Korean Peninsula, impeding the pace of North-South reunification. A peaceful reunification process, perhaps within this decade, that results in a pro-Western Korean nation holds the best chance for preserving peace in Northeast Asia.

A nuclear-armed North Korea would build pressure on South Korea and Japan to obtain their own nuclear weapons. This of course, would increase tensions in Northeast Asia dramatically. At the same time, Japan and South Korea might reevaluate their security alliances with the U.S. A rearmed Japan that ended its alliance with the U.S. would be viewed by Asians and Americans as a potential security threat.

THE ROLE OF DIPLOMACY TO END NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR THREAT

The agreements of last December 13 and 31 between North and South Korea at least raise the possibility that Pyongyang may agree to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue. These agreements came rather quickly and marked a seeming reversal of Pyongyang's longstanding attempt to use inter-Korean relations to gain political and propaganda advantage over the South.

Much credit for making Pyongyang reverse its stand goes to ROK President Roh's 1988 policy of improving relations with South Korea's communist neighbors in order to isolate the North. Roh wisely has courted Beijing, and it was Roh's policy that ulti-

11 Bermudez, *op. cit.* p. 410.

mately led to Pyongyang's decision last May to accept the formula that both Koreas would become United Nations members. This reversed Pyongyang's longstanding policy of opposing dual U.N. membership. Both Koreas took their U.N. seats last September 17.

U.S. Concession. Building on this momentum, Washington last October unilaterally agreed to withdraw all its nuclear weapons from South Korea, following George Bush's September 27 decision to destroy most American tactical nuclear weapons.

Then Washington and Seoul offered more concessions. On November 8, Roh declared that South Korea would not "manufacture, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons." On December 11, Washington and Seoul announced that North Korea could inspect U.S. bases in South Korea for nuclear weapons. Seven days later, Roh declared that there were no nuclear weapons in South Korea, confirming that the U.S. had withdrawn its nuclear weapons as promised.

Further confidence-building measures between Seoul and Pyongyang were agreed to in the landmark December 13 "Agreement on Reconciliation, Nonaggression, and Exchanges between the South and the North." In this agreement is a joint statement of nonaggression, a pledge to negotiate a peace treaty to replace the 1953 Armistice that ended the Korean War hostilities, and promises to carry out military confidence-building measures such as notification of major military movements, phased reductions of armaments, elimination of "surprise attack" capabilities, and the establishment of a "hot line" between military authorities to prevent military accidents.¹²

The December 13 agreement also contains pledges to open direct contact between the peoples of the North and South, a concession long sought by Seoul. Such direct contact will include reuniting families divided by the Korean War and resuming mail and telecommunications services. Three joint committees to address political, military, and cultural issues are to be formed to carry out the agreement by the end of this month.

Nuclear Pledge. The critical nuclear issue was addressed in a second agreement initialed last December 31. In it each side pledges not to "test, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons," and not to "possess facilities for nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment." To enforce the agreement, a "North South Joint Nuclear Control Committee" will be organized by March 19, one month after the agreement is to be formally signed. The Committee will oversee inspections of sites "chosen by the other side and agreed to by both parties." In addition, officials of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expect Pyongyang will sign an agreement by the end of this month to allow for IAEA inspection of nuclear sites in North Korea.¹³ Pyongyang to date has refused to sign such an agreement, although it is required by the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty which Pyongyang signed in 1985.

The December 13 and 31 agreements are a historic advance in North-South relations. If successful, the agreements will reduce military tensions on the Peninsula greatly and begin the long delayed process of reunifying North and South. The eco-

12 Full text of agreement can be found in *Korea Newsreview*, December 21, 1991, pp. 10-11.

13 David E. Sanger, "Bush and Seoul Leader Offer to Drop War Games," *New York Times*, January 7, 1992, p. A8.

conomic and personal contacts provided for in the December 13 agreement are similar to those that facilitated the rapid reunification of Germany.

Yet, the December 13 and 31 agreements are mainly broad statements of intent, rather than detailed plans of action. Fulfillment rests largely on the quick formation of four joint committees. To judge Pyongyang's continued sincerity in advancing the North-South peace process, U.S. and ROK officials will be looking for the following moves by North Korea this year that include:

- ◆ Signing an IAEA inspection accord by the end of January.
- ◆ Presenting a list of nuclear installations and materials by the second week of March, or six weeks after signing an inspection accord, as is usually stipulated by IAEA inspection accords.
- ◆ An announcement by February 19 that the December 31 nuclear accord has entered into force.
- ◆ Establishment of the North South Joint Nuclear Control Committee by March 19.
- ◆ Commencement by April of inspections of North Korean nuclear sites by IAEA or South Korean inspectors.

AMERICA'S ROLE IN ENDING NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR THREAT

The Bush Administration repeatedly has identified North Korea's nuclear weapons program as the greatest threat to peace in Asia. Washington also has stated its desire that Pyongyang not only allow international inspection of its nuclear sites, but that it destroy its nuclear weapons facilities. In an interview last December, Commander in Chief of U.S.-ROK forces U.S. Army General Robert W. RisCassi said North Korea would become "an international leper, excluded from political and commercial intercourse," if it continued its nuclear weapons program.¹⁴

The U.S. has important reasons for insisting that North Korea dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities. These include:

- ◆ Preventing North Korea from gaining a decisive military advantage over South Korea that would require a continued large American military presence in South Korea.
- ◆ Avoiding a war on the Korean Peninsula that might be sparked by ROK or U.S. preemptive military strikes against North Korean nuclear facilities.

14 "Text of interview with Gen. RisCassi," *Korea Herald*, December 17, 1992, p. 5.

- ◆ Preventing Pyongyang from becoming a source of nuclear weapons or nuclear weapons technology to radical regimes opposed to the U.S.
- ◆ Insuring that a North Korean nuclear threat does not prompt South Korea or Japan to reconsider their pledges not to obtain nuclear weapons.
- ◆ Preventing a nuclear-armed North Korea from impeding a peaceful reunification process between North and South Korea.
- ◆ Insuring that a rise in tensions due to North Korea obtaining nuclear weapons does not stall South Korea's progress in creating democratic institutions.

The U.S. and South Korea already have made concessions to induce North Korea to cease its nuclear weapons program. At the same time, Washington and Seoul must show that these concessions require reciprocity from North Korea. For this reason, for example, on November 20 the U.S. decided to halt planned reductions in U.S. troop levels in South Korea rather than keep withdrawing troops. U.S. troop strength would be frozen at 37,000 by the end of 1992. On hold would be plans for further reductions of 5,000 to 6,000 troops by 1994. The U.S. also hinted that it would consider deploying *Patriot* surface-to-air missiles to counter North Korean *Scud* missiles.

It is necessary for Washington and Seoul to continue to demonstrate resolve and flexibility to press Pyongyang to end its potential nuclear threat. A U.S. strategy to end North Korea's nuclear weapons program should include the following six steps:

Step # 1: A statement from a high Administration official that, by the end of 1992, North Korea must begin to dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities.

The Bush Administration should set a deadline for the end of this year for Pyongyang to prove that it is destroying its nuclear weapons facilities. The reason for making a firm deadline is that Pyongyang's plutonium reprocessing plant may begin operation in mid-1992, meaning that a nuclear bomb may be completed by mid-1993. It is especially critical that IAEA or South Korean inspectors be satisfied that the nuclear reprocessing equipment in the Yongbyon nuclear weapons facility has been destroyed by the end of this year.

Step # 2: Offering to upgrade U.S.-North Korean diplomatic relations if North Korea allows IAEA or South Korean nuclear inspectors by April.

According to the schedule set by the December 31 nuclear accord, South Korean nuclear inspectors could enter North Korea as early as April. IAEA inspectors could also enter the North by April. If Pyongyang permits this, it will take a major step in eliminating the nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. should respond by offering to upgrade diplomatic relations with North Korea. Until last week, diplomatic contact had been confined to meetings of U.S. and North Korean diplomats in Beijing. On January 22, for the first time, U.S. Undersecretary of State Arnold Kanter met in New York with Kim Young-sun, Secretary for International Affairs of the North Korean Communist Party. The U.S. Undersecretary should visit Pyongyang after nuclear

inspections begin. The U.S. also should begin to ease its 41-year trade embargo by allowing trade in farm products.

Step # 3: Withholding establishment of normalized diplomatic and trade relations until it is clear that North Korea has destroyed its nuclear weapons-making facilities.

The promise of full diplomatic and trade relations are the most powerful carrots that the U.S. can offer North Korea. North Korea remains isolated in the international arena and needs access to foreign technology and credits to sustain its economy following cuts in support from Moscow and Beijing. The U.S. should withhold full diplomatic and trade ties until IAEA and South Korean inspectors are certain that Pyongyang has destroyed its nuclear weapons facilities.

Step # 4: Urging China to press North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program.

Despite repeated requests by Washington, Beijing so far has refused to apply sufficient pressure on Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program. Despite recent cooling of relations, China remains North Korea's main ally and patron. The U.S. should tell China that forcing North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program is Beijing's best opportunity in 1992 to demonstrate it is committed to promoting peace in Asia.

The U.S. should also urge Japan to continue to withhold normalization of relations with North Korea until it is clear that the North has destroyed its nuclear weapons facilities. Tokyo shocked Seoul and Washington in September 1990 when it began negotiations to normalize relations with Pyongyang. After warnings from Washington and Seoul not to reward Pyongyang's then-hostility toward Seoul with aid and trade, Tokyo chose to link normalization of relations with Pyongyang with the nuclear issue. The Bush Administration should impress upon the Japanese the need to maintain pressure on North Korea until the nuclear issue has been fully resolved.

Step # 5: Keeping U.S. troops in Korea to demonstrate American resolve

The Bush Administration should keep its troop levels in Korea at 37,000, and should oppose congressional attempts to reduce this number. These American forces are needed to deter the North this year, when the command of ROK and U.S. forces in South Korea will pass to a ROK General. Only when North Korea demonstrates that it is dismantling its nuclear weapons facilities should the U.S. proceed with plans for further reductions of troops in the ROK.

Step # 6: Consulting with Seoul about appropriate political, economic, and military measures to be taken if Pyongyang does not begin dismantling its nuclear weapons facilities by the end of this year.

Washington and Seoul should now be consulting as to what measures to take if Pyongyang refuses to fulfill its obligations under the December 31 agreement, by destroying its nuclear weapons facilities. Political measures that might be considered should include attempts to mobilize Chinese, Japanese, and Russian support for a multinational campaign condemning Pyongyang's nuclear program. This campaign should culminate in a United Nations Security Council resolution condemning North Korea's

nuclear ambitions. Should this fail to convince North Korea, the U.S. and the ROK should be prepared to lead an international economic boycott of the North.

Military action, like precision air strikes against Yongbyon and other North Korean nuclear research facilities, should be evaluated only as a last resort. It is very likely North Korea would retaliate with strikes against the South, or even launch a second war against the South. Military action should be preceded by resumption of U.S.-ROK large scale military exercises to complement the multilateral political campaign. The U.S. also should use military exercises to deploy advanced weapons to the South, such as *Patriot* missiles to counter North Korean *Scuds*, and F-117 stealth strike aircraft.

CONCLUSION

America has both short- and long-term interests in convincing North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons facilities in 1992. By mid-1993, Pyongyang may have a bomb. For Washington, elimination of North Korea's nuclear weapons program will promote peace in Northeast Asia by reducing the threat of war on the Korean Peninsula. The U.S. also must not allow North Korea to become a source of nuclear technology or nuclear weapons for radical regimes that would use those weapons against America and America's friends. The U.S., moreover, has a long-term interest in ensuring that a nuclear military advantage by Pyongyang does not impede the peaceful reunification of Korea, which in turn offers the best prospect for preserving peace in Northeast Asia into the next century.

Beginning the Process. North and South Korea deserve great praise for taking steps to eliminate the nuclear threat to peace in Korea. The December 13 and 31 agreements, if implemented, will go far to begin the process of peaceful reunification of their divided nation. Washington should be prepared to follow Seoul by upgrading political and economic ties with Pyongyang only if it fulfills its obligation in the December 31 agreement by destroying its nuclear weapons facilities. If Pyongyang refuses, then Washington and Seoul must confront the hard reality of compelling the North to end its nuclear weapons threat.

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