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## NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR THREAT CHALLENGES THE WORLD AND TESTS AMERICA'S RESOLVE

### INTRODUCTION

The most critical foreign policy challenge now facing President Bill Clinton is how to terminate North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Former President George Bush started to confront North Korea's nuclear challenge in 1991. His effort, and a year of intense diplomatic activity by the Clinton Administration and the Republic of Korea (ROK), has not yet convinced North Korea to stop its nuclear weapons program. Pyongyang's reluctance to fulfill a December 29 agreement with Washington to allow another round of inspections of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) almost caused a showdown in the United Nations Security Council. While this was averted by Pyongyang's concession on February 15 to allow a new round of inspections, the crisis is not resolved. The Administration must continue its diplomacy to convince Pyongyang to surrender all reprocessed weapons-grade nuclear fuel; allow full and regular IAEA inspections; and implement the mutual nuclear inspections treaty signed by the North and the South two years ago.

If diplomacy fails, the options open to the United States and South Korea are grim. If Washington and Seoul seek economic sanctions to compel nuclear inspections, they risk war. In a speech on January 1, 1994, North Korean leader Kim Il-sung warned that pressures or threats would lead to "catastrophe."<sup>1</sup> But bowing to this threat by continuing negotiations is also risky. Prolonged diplomacy may give North Korea the time it needs to build nuclear weapons. And this could lead to grave new dangers of nuclear terrorism and proliferation.

One option the United States must avoid is muddle and indecision. President Clinton must continue to work with South Korean President Kim Young Sam to convince North Korea to abandon its nuclear ambitions. But if Pyongyang refuses to comply, both Washington and Seoul must prepare a program of political and economic sanctions, as well as military measures, to deter possible North Korean aggression.

1 Press release, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Permanent Mission to the United Nations, January 1, 1994.

Government estimates of North Korea's nuclear capabilities in Washington and Seoul range from grave to frightening. According to South Korean officials, Pyongyang has acquired enough plutonium to build one to three weapons. Others estimate that North Korea already possesses one or two nuclear weapons. But one point is not debatable: very soon North Korea will have the ability to produce several nuclear weapons annually. For example, when a 50 megawatt reactor in the Yongbyon nuclear research complex reaches full operation, perhaps as early as next year, North Korea will be able to make enough plutonium for about six Hiroshima-sized bombs a year. These weapons would then be controlled by Kim Il-sung, who conceived the 1950 invasion of South Korea, which cost the lives of 55,246 Americans and three million Koreans.<sup>2</sup> Kim has brought his country to the brink of economic collapse but still maintains a million-man military machine. He also is responsible for numerous acts of terrorism against South Korean soldiers, civilians, and government leaders.

**Threats to America.** If North Korea is allowed to produce nuclear weapons, Americans may then face unprecedented threats at home and abroad. For example, North Korea could sell nuclear weapons to terrorist states like Iran, Libya, and Syria. In Asia, U.S. allies like Japan and South Korea might quickly lose confidence in U.S. nuclear guarantees and possibly seek their own nuclear deterrent against North Korea. Thus, North Korea might precipitate an unravelling of the U.S.-led security network that has preserved stability in Asia since 1945.

The Clinton Administration's failure to explain what is at stake in Korea risks losing crucial American public support for U.S. policy toward the Korean Peninsula. Clinton's public silence surely conveys a lack of American determination to North Korea's rulers.

The Clinton Administration must now exercise the leadership worthy of a great power. It must articulate goals that clarify America's and its allies' determination to prevent North Korea from becoming a nuclear power. Washington should begin now to coordinate with Seoul and Tokyo a program of political and economic sanctions against North Korea. Washington also should seek China's cooperation with any program of sanctions, as China is North Korea's largest trading partner. Moreover, to deter possible North Korean aggression, the U.S. should make judicious military reinforcements to ensure the safety of the 37,000 U.S. troops in South Korea. Steps Washington must take to end North Korea's nuclear threat should include:

- ✓ **Stating** that the principal U.S. policy goal is to prevent North Korea from both acquiring and using nuclear weapons.
- ✓ **Explaining** to the American people the potential dangers posed by a nuclear weapons-armed North Korea.
- ✓ **Declaring** that North Korea can expect improved economic and diplomatic relations with the U.S., South Korea, and Japan if it opens its nuclear facilities to inspections that lead to the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program.
- ✓ **Working** now with U.S. allies in Seoul and Tokyo to formulate a graduated, and if needed, sustained program of political and economic sanctions against North Korea if it refuses to fulfill its nuclear inspection obligations.

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2 U.S. deaths figure from *The World Almanac, 1992* (New York: Pharos Books, 1991), p. 702.

- ✓ **Seeking**, but not depending on, China's cooperation with ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program.
- ✓ **Reinforcing** U.S. armed forces in and around South Korea to deter possible North Korean aggression.

## **DIMINISHING RETURNS OF DIPLOMACY**

Since 1988, Washington, Seoul, Tokyo, and the International Atomic Energy Agency have labored hard to convince Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program. Seoul and Washington began contacts with Pyongyang in 1988 to upgrade relations. In part as a gesture to the North, U.S. troop levels in South Korea were reduced in 1990 and 1991, as was the size of the annual U.S.-ROK "Team Spirit" military exercise.

These and many more inducements, however, have not changed North Korean behavior. North Korea has refused to meet its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), which Pyongyang signed in 1985, obstructed IAEA inspections, and has repeatedly rebuffed South Korean attempts to improve relations. In May 1991, two U.S. diplomatic objectives were outlined by then-U.S. Undersecretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz: submission by Pyongyang to all inspections by the IAEA as required by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and elimination of a suspected plutonium reprocessing plant. But after nearly three years, Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo still are seeking the objectives outlined by Undersecretary Wolfowitz.<sup>3</sup> Highlights of this three-year campaign include:

### **Late 1991 through 1992: Cooperation**

In late 1991, Washington and Seoul offered three inducements to Pyongyang to gain its cooperation in allowing nuclear inspections. First, the U.S. withdrew its tactical nuclear weapons from South Korea. Second, Washington and Seoul canceled their annual "Team Spirit" large-scale military exercise for 1992. Third, Washington agreed in December 1991 to the first-ever high-level diplomatic meeting with Pyongyang. This meeting took place in January 1992 when Undersecretary of State Arnold Kantor met with a North Korean representative in New York.

The result of Washington's late 1991-early 1992 diplomacy was two agreements that offered hope that the looming crisis could be resolved. In late December 1991, Pyongyang and Seoul signed an agreement pledging that they would: (1) not possess, manufacture, or use nuclear weapons; (2) not possess plutonium reprocessing facilities; and (3) negotiate a system of mutual nuclear inspections.

By June 1992 the North was refusing to negotiate for mutual North-South nuclear inspections. But the North did sign a January 1992 agreement with the IAEA to allow "safeguards," the placement of monitoring cameras and seals on nuclear equipment, and to allow IAEA nuclear inspections. In 1992 the IAEA made six inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities. Pyongyang subsequently denied the IAEA's assertion that it was constructing a large plutonium reprocessing plant, and in September 1992, the North declared it would finish building the suspected reprocessing plant. The North broke off nuclear inspection talks with South Korea at the end of 1992.

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3 Larry A. Niksch, "Pyongyang Lowers the Stakes," *The Asian Wall Street Journal*, December 9, 1993.

### **1993: North Korea limits IAEA access**

North Korea was fearful that the IAEA had learned too much from its initial 1992 inspections about the extent of the North's plutonium reprocessing. Last year, Pyongyang began a series of delaying tactics. When the IAEA pressed, in March 1993, for "special inspections" of two nuclear waste dumps, Pyongyang declared on March 12 that it intended to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. At this point, the new U.S. Administration of Bill Clinton began a series of low-level bilateral meetings to convince North Korea not to withdraw from the NPT and to begin regular IAEA inspections.

After two sets of negotiations in June and July, Pyongyang agreed to "suspend as long as it considers necessary" its withdrawal from the NPT.<sup>4</sup> It also agreed to negotiate simultaneously with Washington, Seoul, and the IAEA on the nuclear issue. Washington offered "assurances against the threat or use of force, including nuclear weapons," that the U.S. had never offered to any other nation.<sup>5</sup> The only 1993 IAEA visit North Korea permitted was in August to replace film and batteries in some monitoring cameras. The agency was not allowed to monitor nuclear fuels or wastes to check for possible plutonium reprocessing. IAEA requests for regular inspections in September and October were rejected by the North. By early December, the IAEA said that it could no longer provide any "meaningful assurances" that North Korea was not making more plutonium for non-peaceful purposes.<sup>6</sup>

### **1994: Continued North Korean obstruction and the U.S. package deal.**

The impasse created by North Korea's refusal to honor its agreement was broken by a November 11, 1993, proposal by Pyongyang to negotiate with the IAEA to "ensure the continuity of safeguards."<sup>7</sup> Pyongyang also offered to negotiate with the United States a "package solution" in which Washington would renounce any "hostile policy" against Pyongyang.<sup>8</sup> Pyongyang, for its part, would comply with safeguard agreements and remain committed to the NPT.

This offer led to a flurry of talks between Pyongyang and Washington, which after consulting closely with Seoul, produced a tentative agreement announced on January 5 of this year. According to the U.S. State Department, Pyongyang agreed to permit one more round of nuclear inspections by the IAEA of seven nuclear sites that it had not visited since 1992. When those inspections began, Washington and Seoul planned to announce the suspension of the annual "Team Spirit" military exercise, and Washington and Pyongyang would begin a third round of talks in which the U.S. expected to seek regular inspections by the IAEA and a resumption of talks between North and South Korea.

It is not clear from the Clinton Administration's statements what degree of access it sought to North Korean nuclear sites. Recent Administration statements indicate Washington was seeking only access necessary to insure "continuity of safeguards."<sup>9</sup> If true, then the Administration

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4 Douglas Jehl, "North Korea Says It Won't Pull Out of the Arms Pact Now," *The New York Times*, June 12, 1993, p. 1.

5 *Ibid.*

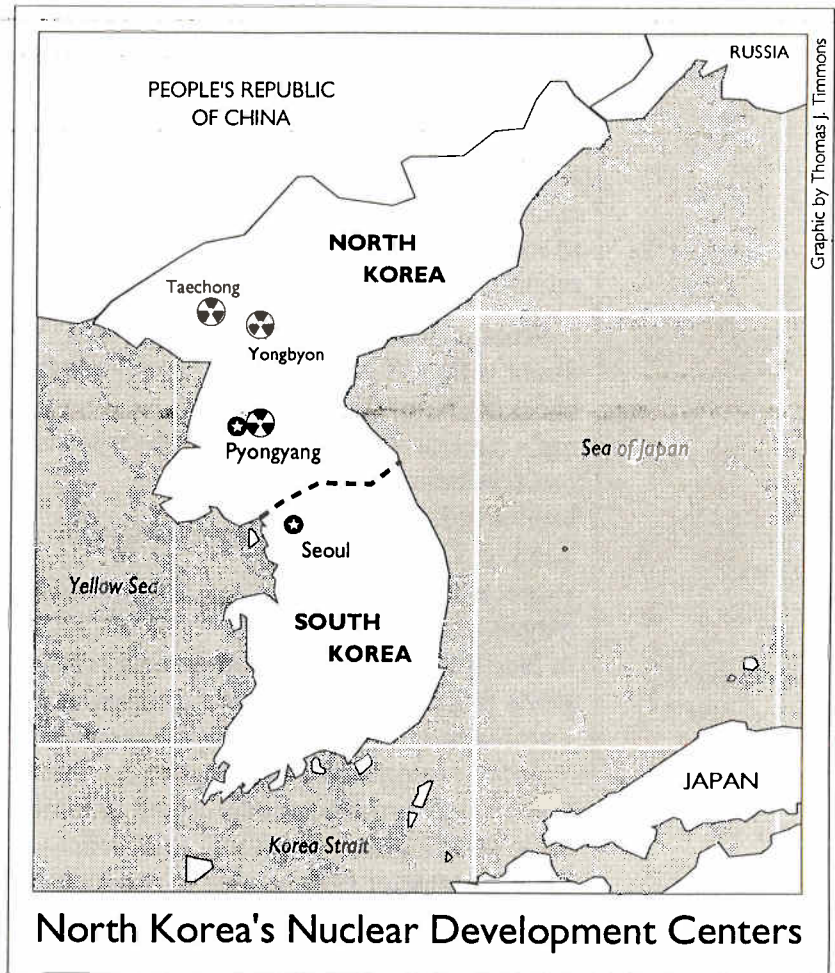
6 R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Analysts Are Pessimistic On Korean Nuclear Inspections," *The Washington Post*, December 3, 1993, p. A35.

7 Press Release No. 43, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Permanent Mission to the United Nations, November 12, 1993.

8 *Ibid.*



was limiting its goals to the changing of film and batteries in IAEA cameras. And during January, as Pyongyang and the IAEA discussed a new round of IAEA inspections, a new impasse loomed. By mid-January, the North contended that it had agreed to permit only restricted visits to verify “safeguards” like cameras. The IAEA countered that it would not send an inspection team unless North Korea agreed to all of the IAEA’s requests.<sup>10</sup> Pyongyang avoided a potential IAEA recommendation that the United National Security Council seek sanctions to compel inspections by agreeing on February 15 to a new round of IAEA inspections. Left still to be resolved, however, is whether North Korea in time will accept full and regular nuclear inspections of all its nuclear facilities by the IAEA, and eventually by South Korea. Outstanding important issues also include the surrender to the IAEA of weapons-grade nuclear fuel the North may already have produced, and the dismantling of nuclear fuel reprocessing facilities in North Korea.



Graphic by Thomas J. Timmons

## DOES NORTH KOREA HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

North Korea’s refusal to permit comprehensive IAEA inspections of its nuclear facilities adds to international uncertainty about the North’s nuclear weapons program. It increases reasonable speculation in Seoul and Washington that Pyongyang may very soon, if it does not already, possess nuclear weapons. During his confirmation hearing on February 2, Secretary of Defense William Perry said, “it is possible they could make one or even two devices, perhaps even nuclear bombs.”<sup>11</sup> Another serious assessment was offered last September by South Ko-

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- 9 Lynn Davis, “North Korea: No Capitulation,” *The Washington Post*, January 26, 1994, p. A21; R. Jeffrey Smith, “North Korea Faces Inspection Deadline,” *The Washington Post*, February 7, 1994, p. A13; Nyan Chanda, “Bomb and Bombast,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, February 10, 1994, p. 17.
- 10 David E. Sanger, “North Korea Reported to Balk at Inspection Terms,” *The New York Times*, January 21, 1994, p. A5.
- 11 Secretary of Defense-designate William Perry, remarks before the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee, February 2, 1994.

rean President Kim Young Sam, who told Japanese reporters that North Korea may have enough plutonium to make up to three nuclear weapons.<sup>12</sup>

What is not in doubt is that, if unchecked, North Korea's nuclear weapons producing capabilities will grow quickly. The IAEA suspects that a 5 megawatt reactor

in North Korea's Yongbyon nuclear research complex has already produced enough weapons-grade plutonium to make one to three weapons. Under construction in Yongbyon is a 50 megawatt reactor, which could begin operation in 1995, and a 200 megawatt reactor near the city of Taechon—northwest of Yongbyon—that could begin operation in 1996.<sup>13</sup> The new Yongbyon reactor may produce enough spent uranium fuel that, after chemical reprocessing, can produce 40 to 60 kilograms of plutonium a year—enough to make four to six bombs. Likewise, the Taechon reactor may be able to produce 160 to 200 kilograms of plutonium a year—enough for sixteen to twenty bombs.<sup>14</sup> Also under construction in Yongbyon is a large spent-fuel reprocessing facility that may be completed in 1996. Since the mid-1950s, North Korea has built about twenty known nuclear facilities—reactors, research sites, uranium mines, and uranium processing plants.<sup>15</sup> And since North Korea long has placed important military facilities underground, it is reasonable to expect there may be other nuclear facilities buried in the North.

**Missiles and Chemical Weapons.** In addition to its large nuclear weapons program, North Korea also has invested heavily in the production of missiles and chemical weapons. In 1987 North Korea began producing Soviet-designed SCUD-B missiles with about a 200-mile range.<sup>16</sup> The North is credited with possessing at least 30 SCUD missiles, but could have hundreds.<sup>17</sup> North Korea has sold scores of SCUD missiles to Iran. With possible financial assis-

## North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Potential

Location & Facility	Begins Operation	Weapons Potential
<b>Yongbyon:</b> 5 Megawatt Reactor	1986	May yield enough spent fuel to make plutonium for one bomb a year; may shut down soon to yield more plutonium.
50 Megawatt Reactor	1995?	May yield enough spent fuel to make plutonium for 4 to 6 bombs a year.
Small Reprocessing Plant	1990?	Capability unknown.
Large Reprocessing Plant	1996?	May reprocess enough spent fuel to make plutonium for 10 bombs a year.
<b>Taechon:</b> 200 Megawatt Reactor	1996?	May yield enough spent fuel to make plutonium for 16 to 20 bombs a year.
<b>Pyongyang:</b> Reprocessing Plant	1975?	Experimental facility, capability unknown.

Source: *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 1992, May 1993; *Chosun Ilbo*, December 8, 1993.

12 *Korea Herald*, September 26, 1993, p. 2.

13 Kim Hong-muk, "Energy Institute Reports Status of DPRK Nuclear Facilities," *Tong-A-Ilbo*, July 8, 1993, p. 2, in *FBIS-East Asia*, July 9, 1993, p. 28.

14 Numbers of bombs are based on estimates of 10 kilograms of plutonium per bomb. David Albright and Mark Hibbs, "North Korea's Plutonium Puzzle," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, November 1992, p. 38.

15 "Study Details DPRK Atomic Power Facilities," *Chosun Ilbo*, December 15, 1993, p. 6, in *FBIS-East Asia*, December 15, 1993, p. 35.

16 Joseph S. Bermudez, Jr., "New Developments in North Korean Missile Program," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, August 1990, p. 343.

17 International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1993-1994* (London: Brassey's, 1993), p. 160; Bill Gertz, "Patriot missile does not provide full protection from SCUD attack," *The Washington Times*, January 28, 1994, p. A6.

tance from Iran, North Korea has developed and is now producing a modified 600-mile range SCUD called the "Nodong-1." From North Korea, this missile can reach all of South Korea and Osaka, Japan's second largest city. North Korea may also be working on a 1,200-mile range variant of the SCUD. The North may not now be capable of building a nuclear warhead for its SCUDs, but it may be capable of making less complex chemical warheads.<sup>18</sup> North Korea's chemical warfare arsenal is large and poses a grave threat to South Korea and to U.S. forces there. A 1991 U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency report noted that North Korea may have a chemical weapons stockpile of 250 metric tons.<sup>19</sup>

<b>Balance of Forces on the Korean Peninsula</b>				
	North Korea	South Korea	U.S. Forces in ROK	Other U.S. Forces in Asia
<b>ARMY</b>				
Men	1,000,000	520,000	28,000 (2nd Div)	
Tanks	3,700	1,800	116	in Japan: 18,300 Marines
Armored Personnel Carriers	2,500	1,550	138	in Hawaii: 18,000 Army Troops
Artillery	2,300	3,500	48	
Self-Propelled Artillery	4,500	900	0	
Multiple Rocket Launchers	2,280	140	36	
Surface-to Surface Missiles	30-100+	12	0	
Surface-to-Air Missiles	100,000	850	0	
Helicopters	290	588	200+	
<b>AIR FORCE</b>				
Combat Aircraft	730, includes:	445, includes:	84, includes:	in Japan:
	14 MiG-29	48 F-16	72 F-16	36 F-15C
	46 MiG-23	96 F-4	12 OA-10	18 F-15E
	160 MiG-21	190 F-5		24 F-16
	180 MiG-19			+60 combat aircraft on U.S.S. Independence
	240 MiG-17			
	36 Su-25			
<b>NAVY</b>				
Aircraft Carriers	0	0		6
Cruisers	0	0		29
Submarines	25	4		34
Destroyers	0	9		17
Frigates	3	29		14
Patrol Craft	387	120		
Amphibious Craft	231	14		
<b>Note:</b> These are approximate estimates. <b>Source:</b> <i>Military Balance 1993-1994</i> ; Department of Defense.				

## NUCLEAR ILLUSIONS AND NORTH KOREA'S DECLINE

North Korea may be in its terminal and most dangerous phase of existence. Perhaps the most plausible reason for its expensive nuclear weapons program is that North Korean leader Kim Il-sung regards nuclear weapons as the only means to preserve his regime. Thus, North Korea's large military threat to South Korea must be taken very seriously. Former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger recently noted that North Korea's isolation and economic decline creates "a classic situation for their going to war."<sup>20</sup> Kim Il-sung has promised many times to reunify Korea under his rule. For this purpose, Kim has amassed a 1.1 million-man armed forces and a weapons arsenal that outnumbers South Korea's armed forces in men, tanks, armored personnel

<sup>18</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, *North Korea: The Foundations for Military Strength* (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office), 1991, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Remarks to The Heritage Foundation symposium, "The U.S. Response to Possible North Korean Aggression," December 15, 1993.



carriers, artillery, rocket artillery, long-range missiles, anti-aircraft missiles, combat aircraft, and small amphibious assault ships. While North Korean weapons are largely inferior in quality to those of South Korea and the United States, their numbers, when combined with the advantage of surprise, make North Korea a dangerous foe. To help achieve surprise, many North Korean army, air force, and navy units are based underground. Surprise would be assisted by North Korean ground forces, which have been heavily mechanized in the last decades, and by North Korea's special forces troops, which number 100,000 according to the Pentagon. Some U.S. analysts estimate that there may be only 24 hours warning before a North Korean invasion.<sup>21</sup>

**Terrorist History.** Kim's volatility and disregard for human life are proven by his long-standing policy of violence and terrorism. Kim Il-sung played a leading role in starting the 1950 to 1953 Korean War. Kim sponsored attempts to assassinate South Korea's president in 1968, 1970, 1974, 1981, and 1983. Just before the 1988 Summer Olympic games in South Korea, North Korean agents blew up a South Korean airliner, killing 115 passengers.

The dismal condition of North Korean society is a testament to Kim Il-sung's lack of regard for his own countrymen. Life in North Korea is characterized by power and plenty for the ruling elite. The vast majority, however, face relentless indoctrination and grinding poverty.<sup>22</sup> According to South Korea's National Unification Board (NUB), a government agency that coordinates policy on North Korea, North Korea's economy contracted a total of 16.5 percent from 1990 through 1992.<sup>23</sup> North Korea is unable to import sufficient energy and food to keep its people warm in the winter or properly fed at any time of the year. The NUB believes that fuel shortages force North Korean factories to operate at 40 percent of capacity. Also, the NUB estimates North Korea had a grain shortfall of 1.24 million tons in 1992. Two meals a day are common in North Korea and reports of isolated food riots are increasing.

## NORTH KOREAN NUKES: GLOBAL AND REGIONAL THREATS

Should it obtain nuclear weapons, North Korea could unleash a new age of nuclear terrorism and undermine long-term political stability in Asia. For Americans, the most dangerous threat is that North Korea will sell some of its nuclear weapons or production technology to other terrorist regimes. North Korea's traffic in SCUD missiles with Iran and Pyongyang's past support for terrorist organizations in the Middle East, Africa, and South America offer ample precedent. Whether Middle East terrorists use these weapons or not, the sale of nuclear bombs to terrorist states will surely help finance North Korean development of longer-range ballistic missiles that eventually may be armed with nuclear warheads. With these missiles, North Korea and its radical allies in the Middle East could threaten a larger number of countries.

North Korean success in building atomic weapons also would be a serious blow to global nuclear nonproliferation. North Korea will have proved to other potential nuclear proliferators that the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and the International Atomic Energy Agency are not obstacles to their own nuclear ambitions. The consequences for Americans and their allies could be very costly. The cause of nuclear nonproliferation might then require repeated military

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21 Barton Gellman, "Trepidation at Root Of U.S. Korea Policy," *The Washington Post*, December 12, 1993, p. A49.

22 See Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., ed., "Orwell's Nightmare: Human Rights In North Korea," *Heritage Lecture* No. 394, May 20, 1992.

23 "Hellish Life in Workers' Paradise," *Business Korea*, November 1993, p. 26.



confrontations to stop would-be proliferators. Failure to confront nuclear proliferators might then force Americans and their allies to choose between political capitulation to or possible attacks by future nuclear-armed rogue states.

**Destabilizing Asia.** A nuclear-armed North Korea also might quickly destabilize Asia. Absent a strong American response to North Korea's possession of nuclear weapons, South Korea and Japan may soon doubt the strength of U.S. nuclear and military guarantees. Japan and South Korea could decide to protect themselves by building their own nuclear weapons. Such nuclear proliferation in Asia may lead to reduced American public support for current military commitments in Asia, and, possibly, to withdrawal of U.S. forces in Asia. An American strategic withdrawal from Asia would devastate U.S. power and prestige in the Far East, and spur a regional arms race.

## AMERICAN LEADERSHIP IS ESSENTIAL

American political leadership continues to be a critical factor in preserving peace in Asia and in advancing U.S. interests there. American sacrifices in Northeast Asia since 1945, including the loss of 55,246 Americans during the Korean War, plus the cost of maintaining forward deployed forces in South Korea and Japan, helped win the Cold War in Asia against the former Soviet Union. In early January, South Korean President Kim Young Sam told the President of The Heritage Foundation, Edwin J. Feulner, Jr., that America's military presence is "the most helpful factor" for preserving peace on the Korean Peninsula. Some 37,000 U.S. troops in South Korea demonstrate America's current commitment to South Korea's safety. Now that North Korea is posing an even greater threat by building nuclear weapons, America must exercise the leadership to convince—and if that fails, to compel—North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons program.

**Economic Interests.** Should North Korea succeed in building a nuclear arsenal, the U.S. and South Korean strategic cooperation will be threatened. This cooperation is the foundation of South Korea's economic prosperity and its democratic system. South Korean President Kim Young Sam is now pursuing far-reaching political and economic reforms that will facilitate greater U.S. trade and investment. South Korea is America's eighth largest trading partner; total two-way trade exceeded \$30 billion in 1992.<sup>24</sup> North Korea could reverse South Korea's tremendous economic and democratic progress by precipitating a new conflict. Such a conflict would also damage the economy of Japan, which is South Korea's largest trading partner and America's second largest.

**Unification.** North Korea's possession of a nuclear arsenal also postpones peaceful reunification with South Korea. Korea's unification under a democratic system is the best outcome on the Korean peninsula for Koreans and Americans. Ending North Korea's nuclear threat is the first requirement for the eventual reunification of Korea.

A resolution of North Korea's nuclear challenge will require placing this issue at the top of the Clinton Administration's foreign policy agenda. To date, the Administration's policy toward North Korea has lacked consistency. In late November, President Clinton said that "North Korea cannot be allowed to develop a nuclear bomb."<sup>25</sup> But by January his own State Depart-

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<sup>24</sup> Richard D. Fisher and Jason E. Bruzdinski, eds., *U.S. and Asia Statistical Handbook, 1993* (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 1993).

ment was backing away from this unequivocal statement, claiming that the President “misspoke.” And the Administration’s failure to clearly state its goals has invited criticism that threatens to undermine American public support for its policies. For example, failure to explain adequately the December 29 tentative agreement on nuclear inspections with North Korea resulted in criticism that the U.S. was settling for a one-time IAEA inspection, when in fact it had not.<sup>26</sup> Even more serious are questions that while it tentatively convinced North Korea to open seven sites for inspection, as it announced on January 5, the Administration also agreed to inspections limited to ensuring “continuity of safeguards.” This means that instead of full inspections required by the IAEA, the Clinton Administration may have settled for a much lower standard, limited to the changing of film in monitoring cameras. Such vague demands by Washington may have encouraged Pyongyang to dictate its own terms to the IAEA, thus contributing to the current impasse. An American policy toward North Korea that re-establishes U.S. leadership and advances U.S. interests must:

✓ **State that the principal U.S. policy goal is to prevent North Korea from both acquiring and using nuclear weapons.**

A clear statement of America’s paramount goals is the first requirement for a successful policy to address North Korea’s nuclear challenge. Such a statement is the first element in building American public support for future U.S. actions, sustaining the cooperation of America’s allies, and assuring North Korea of America’s resolve. The Clinton Administration should make clear whether its goals are limited to ensuring “continuity of safeguards” or also include ending North Korea’s nuclear weapons-producing capability. The Administration invites criticism by failing to respond to the implications of U.S. intelligence estimates that North Korea may have one or more nuclear weapons. If the North possesses nuclear weapons, the U.S. goal must be to have North Korea peacefully surrender those weapons and discard its nuclear weapons-making capability.

✓ **Explain to the American people the potential dangers posed by a nuclear weapons-armed North Korea.**

The Clinton Administration has not adequately explained to the American people the gravity of North Korea’s nuclear challenge. The President and Administration officials have offered only sound bites of policy statements during media interviews. The Administration should explain fully to the American people the history of America’s commitment to peace on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea’s history of volatility and the danger of a North Korean surprise attack warrant a serious effort to warn Americans and their allies of the dangers they face. The Clinton Administration also must make a greater effort to build bipartisan support for its North Korean policies. Former Reagan National Security Advisor Richard V. Allen has suggested that many former Republican Administration officials would be ready to help the Clinton team.<sup>27</sup> Their experience and cooperation are available. They should be enlisted.

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25 NBC, “Meet The Press,” December 7, 1993.

26 This criticism forced an embarrassing clarification by Undersecretary of State Lynn Davis, *op. cit.*

27 Remarks to The Heritage Foundation symposium, “The U.S. Response to Possible North Korean Aggression,” December 15, 1993.

- ✓ **Declare that North Korea can expect improved economic and diplomatic relations with the United States, South Korea, and Japan if it opens its nuclear facilities to inspections that lead to the dismantling of its nuclear weapons program.**

North Korea should be told that it must open all of its nuclear facilities to the International Atomic Energy Agency and to South Korean inspectors. But Pyongyang must be made to understand that inspections are not enough. Bill Clinton should put Pyongyang on notice that the crisis it started will not be resolved until it turns over to the IAEA all of its reprocessed weapons-grade plutonium and dismantles its nuclear weapons reactors and reprocessing plants.

Pyongyang also should be told that it will be rewarded once it begins IAEA inspections and mutual inspections with South Korea. The rewards North Korea can expect will be tied to the degree of progress it demonstrates in dismantling its nuclear weapons program. Full IAEA inspections should be rewarded with greater diplomatic recognition. Greater economic relations with South Korea and Japan must be linked to inspections of North Korean nuclear facilities by South Korea. Normalization of full relations with the United States, South Korea, and Japan must be linked to the dismantling of North Korea's nuclear weapons facilities.

- ✓ **Work with U.S. allies in Seoul and Tokyo to formulate a graduated, and if needed, sustained program of political and economic sanctions against North Korea if it refuses to fulfill its nuclear inspection obligations.**

The possibility remains that diplomacy alone will not convince North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program. Washington should work now with its allies to prepare a graduated program of political and economic sanctions in case they are needed. The first level of sanctions should include political condemnation at the United Nations. If the U.N. refuses to condemn North Korea, then Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington need to demonstrate their shared resolve by issuing public statements that declare the three nations' intention to resolve the crisis. These declarations should be accompanied by a large U.S.-South Korean military exercise.

Economic sanctions should be pursued if political condemnation does not prompt North Korea to agree to nuclear inspections. Economic sanctions should include a pledge by Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington to suspend all trade with North Korea. Of critical importance would be a pledge by Japan to stop all financial assistance to North Korea from the Korean community in Japan. This community sends to the North some \$600 million to \$1 billion every year. Together with its trade, Japan is a source for about \$2 billion to \$4 billion a year in foreign exchange and needed goods for North Korea.<sup>28</sup> This foreign exchange allows North Korea to purchase much of the supplies that are critical to its economy and military machine.

- ✓ **Seek, but do not depend on, China's cooperation in ending North Korea's nuclear weapons program.**

It is also time for Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo to vigorously press Beijing to join them in seeking an end to North Korea's nuclear weapons program. For many months China has been urging South Korea and the United States to craft a diplomatic solution to North Korea's nuclear challenge. China has long opposed sanctions against North Korea. China should now be told that if sanctions become necessary, its cooperation will be expected. As North Korea's

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28 Michael Green, "Nippon Nightmare," *The International Economy*, November/December, 1993, p. 32; Richard P. Lawless, "Tokyo's Ties to Pyongyang's Threat," *The Wall Street Journal*, December 28, 1993, p. 10.



largest trading partner, accounting for 75 percent of its oil imports, China's cooperation with any future economic sanctions may ensure their success. However, Washington should not depend on China's cooperation with economic sanctions. It is far more important to secure Japan's cooperation.

✓ **Reinforce U.S. armed forces in and around South Korea to deter possible North Korean aggression**

North Korean threats that future economic sanctions would lead to war must not be ignored. To deter North Korea, Washington must modernize and reinforce American military forces in Northeast Asia. North Korean bluster must not be allowed to deter the United States from strengthening its 37,000 troops in North Korea. To counter North Korean SCUD missiles, already announced plans to deploy the *Patriot* missile defense system should be completed. Armed with chemical warheads, North Korean SCUDs could incapacitate South Korean airbases and ports, thus preventing retaliatory airstrikes and rapid U.S. reinforcements. The United States also should be ready to deploy *Patriot* missiles to Japan. U.S. forces in South Korea also require modern *Apache* attack helicopters and additional A-10 attack aircraft to counter North Korea's numerical advantage in artillery, tanks, and armored personnel carriers. U.S. Air Force units in South Korea and Japan should be given additional F-15 and F-16 fighters, plus more in-flight refueling tankers.

## CONCLUSION

North Korea's nuclear challenge requires that the Clinton Administration step up to its international leadership responsibility. North Korea must not be allowed to use threats of war to force the United States to settle for less than full inspections of all suspected nuclear facilities by the IAEA, and then by South Korea. And the Clinton Administration must insist that North Korea comply with its nuclear inspection obligations promptly, given that North Korea may soon complete large nuclear reactors and reprocessing plants that may enable it to build scores of nuclear weapons a year.

But President Clinton also should add credibility to Washington's words. He should improve America's military position in South Korea as the surest means of deterring a possible North Korean attack. And while Clinton should continue to work with South Korea and Japan to seek a diplomatic solution, he also should be prepared for a failure of diplomacy. This entails working now with Tokyo and Seoul to assemble a program of political and economic sanctions that can be imposed if necessary. It also means explaining to the American people how a nuclear-armed North Korea would threaten vital American, South Korean, and allied security interests.

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