

RUSH!

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TEN STEPS TO ADDRESS NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR THREAT

North Korea's ambition to build an arsenal of nuclear weapons threatens not only America's ally, the Republic of Korea (ROK), and the 37,000 American troops in that country, but also America's vital interest in preserving peace in Asia. The crisis escalated in mid-March, when North Korea refused to allow international inspectors to examine a suspected North Korean nuclear fuel reprocessing facility—a vital component in nuclear weapons production—and then, when in response, South Korea and the United States decided to upgrade and augment their military forces. The current impasse will not likely lead to war, but a protracted period of intense confrontation with North Korea is possible. During this difficult time, the United States must now exercise the leadership to derail and ultimately end North Korea's nuclear ambitions. A strategy to achieve these objectives would incorporate ten recommendations:

- 1) Lead the Allied Coalition.** The United States must be ready to lead its allies, especially the ROK and Japan, in what may become a protracted and tense confrontation with North Korea. The goal should be to convince North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons-making facilities. Washington must not defer leadership to any other country or to the United Nations. North Korea's nuclear weapons program is a threat to vital American interests. A failure of American leadership may invite conflict or cause other states in Asia to consider building their own nuclear weapons.
- 2) Stop Japanese Funding.** Washington should tell Tokyo that it must do its utmost to stop, as soon as possible, the flow of cash from Japan to North Korea. As much as \$1 billion a year flows into North Korea from Koreans living in Japan. This money comes mainly from gambling profits made in popular *pachinko* parlors, and is North Korea's most important source of foreign exchange to purchase fuel and other supplies.
- 3) Understand the Risks of Sanctions.** Washington should be prepared to seek broad economic sanctions against North Korea, such as calling for the termination of all trade with that regime. However, the U.S. government needs to inform the American people and its allies that economic sanctions could result in greater tensions with North Korea, and that the risk of war would be increased.
- 4) Bolster Allied Military Forces.** The U.S. and South Korea should immediately correct any deficiencies in their respective military forces in order to deter a North Korean attack. Washington should accelerate the deployment of *Patriot* missiles to defend against North Korean *SCUD* missiles. America also should systematically dispatch additional attack aircraft and ground-support helicopters to counter North Korea's large advantage in artillery and armor. Plans should be made to augment the Pacific Fleet, including the deployment of one more aircraft carrier, for a total of two on station in Northeast Asia. Washington should urge Seoul to reinforce its counter-artillery capability, upgrade its minefields, and increase its ammunition stocks.
- 5) Increase Intelligence Capabilities.** Washington should review the adequacy of America's intelligence collection to improve the quality of intelligence assessments available to decision makers, especially those that go to President Clinton. North Korea is the most isolated regime on earth, and accurate intelligence about that country, its leadership, and their intentions is very scarce. The President has a critical need for

timely intelligence on the prospect for a North Korean invasion of South Korea, which would constitute the first major national security crisis of his term. Washington cannot rely exclusively on "national technical means" such as satellites, which are unable to locate underground nuclear facilities in North Korea. In addition, Washington should increase intelligence coordination with Tokyo and Seoul.

- 6) **Seek Bipartisan Expertise.** The Clinton Administration should tap into an underutilized resource: the many people with extraordinary knowledge and experience on Korea who have served in previous Administrations and in the Congress. These experienced Americans would be more than willing to help, and ought to be consulted.
- 7) **Build U.S. Public Support.** The Clinton Administration urgently needs to build a bipartisan consensus and to seek broad public support for its Korea policy. The President and Administration spokesmen should explain candidly and in much greater detail to the American people the threat posed by North Korea. In addition, they should explain the value of America's long alliance with the Republic of Korea and contrast the progress in democratization made by ROK President Kim Young Sam with the brutal totalitarian regime of North Korea's Kim Il Sung.
- 8) **Do Not Rely on China or Russia.** The U.S. should not rely on surrogates such as China and Russia to carry out its policy objectives in the region. Nevertheless, Washington should consult with Russia and even formulate military contingency plans. As for China, an important maxim must be kept in mind: Beijing does not have allies, only interests. Today, China prefers a divided Korean Peninsula and cannot be relied upon to take action to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Beijing is Pyongyang's most important friend, supplying 75 percent of its oil. If political and economic sanctions are necessary to stop North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the U.S. should make clear to China that its cooperation is expected and then establish consequences for Chinese non-compliance. Moreover, the U.S. should not yield the command of its military forces to the United Nations.
- 9) **Interdict North Korean Missile Sales.** The U.S. should be prepared to interdict North Korean missile sales and transfers of technology. It should also seek Russian and Chinese cooperation in stopping its citizens from assisting North Korean missile or nuclear weapons development programs.
- 10) **Do Not Cut the U.S. Defense Budget.** Cutting the U.S. defense budget is the wrong message to send to North Korea at this time. The Clinton Administration should make up any defense budget shortfalls, such as the \$50 billion shortfall identified by former Defense Secretary Les Aspin.

North Korea's nuclear challenge poses the first real foreign policy crisis for President Clinton. He deserves the support of all Americans as he tries to resolve this crisis. Taking these steps would help President Clinton strengthen American leadership and help defuse North Korea's threat. Strong, principled American leadership, based on a clearly articulated strategy with broad bipartisan congressional and public support is necessary because the stakes are so high. North Korea's misreading of American resolve might lead to the outbreak of war on the Korean Peninsula, with far reaching consequences for South Korea's 42 million people, and for peace in Asia. For the long run, a failure to pressure North Korea now may result in its acquiring nuclear weapons and eventually transferring them to other dangerous regimes. Hence, postponing decisive action now may invite a larger crisis in the future.

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