

# Special Report on the North Korean Nuclear Weapons Statement

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This report summarizes recent developments, surveys foreign perspectives, and assesses U.S. options in dealing with the North Korean Foreign Ministry statement on February 10, 2005.

## The North Korean Foreign Ministry Statement

On February 10, 2005, the North Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement declaring that North Korea possessed nuclear weapons and that the country would “increase its nuclear arsenal to defend the ideas, system, freedom and democracy that were chosen by the North Korean people.”<sup>2</sup> The declaration was made in response to “the hostile policy of the U.S. towards the DPRK,” which “requires North Korea to possess a nuclear deterrent.” The Foreign Ministry also declared that North Korea wants to participate in the Six-Party Talks, but that they have indefinitely suspended participation until the atmosphere surrounding the talks changes and until they can expect positive results. The statement concluded that there is no change in North Korea’s position of resolving the nuclear issue through negotiations and that North Korea’s ultimate goal is a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.<sup>3</sup>

The statement made several references to Pyongyang’s future actions being contingent upon U.S. policies and behavior towards the DPRK. For years, Pyongyang has expressed its desire to improve relations with the United States, while paradoxically issuing belligerent statements towards Washington. For example, on February 2, 2005, the North Korean media broadcast a statement by a North Korean Air Force officer declaring that the North Korean military would turn U.S. military bases into a “sea of fire” if the United States attacked the DPRK.<sup>4</sup> The Foreign Ministry statement on February 10<sup>th</sup> also followed two seminars held during the previous week in Pyongyang for scholars, military personnel, government officials, and Korean Workers Party members to extol the *sŏn’gun* (military first) politics of Kim Jong Il.<sup>5</sup> The seminars received extensive

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<sup>2</sup> “DPRK FM on Its Stand to Suspend Its Participation in Six-Party Talks for Indefinite Period,” Korean Central News Agency, February 10, 2005, <http://www.kcna.co.jp>; “Chosŏnminjujuimin’gonghwa’guk oemusŏngsŏngmyŏng,” Korean Central News Agency, February 10, 2005, <http://www.kcna.co.jp>.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Korean Central Broadcasting Station, in “DPRK Air Force Officer Warns of Turning US Bases Into ‘Sea of Fire’ at 2 Feb Meeting,” FBIS Document ID: KPP20050202000203.

<sup>5</sup> “Sŏn’gunhyŏngmyŏng’ŏpchŏg’e gwanhan chungang’yŏn’gut’oronhoi chinhaeng,” Korean Central News Agency, February 9, 2005, <http://www.kcna.co.jp>; “Sŏn’gunhyŏngmyŏngch’ongjin’gundaehoi,” Korean Central News Agency, February 2, 2005, <http://www.kcna.co.jp>.

coverage in the North Korean media to display the close unity between the party and the military prior to the Lunar New Year holiday and nuclear declaration.

In a telephone interview with a South Korean newspaper following the statement on February 10<sup>th</sup>, Han Söng Ryöl, North Korea's Deputy Ambassador to the UN, said that North Korea is prepared to return to the Six-Party Talks under the right conditions. He said that direct talks between the United States and North Korea would be a sign that Washington is dropping its "hostile policy" towards Pyongyang. According to Han, the format of the talks (bilateral vs. multilateral) is not important, but he stressed the importance of a change in the U.S. position. He added that North Korea is not "begging for talks with the U.S., but Washington's failure to talk directly with Pyongyang can only be interpreted as a desire to obliterate our system."<sup>6</sup>

### **North Korean Nuclear Capabilities**

The U.S. intelligence community estimates that North Korea has possessed enough weapons-grade plutonium for one and possibly two nuclear weapons since the early 1990s. During 2003, North Korea likely reprocessed the plutonium from 8,000 spent fuel rods that had been in a temporary storage facility in the Yöngbyön Nuclear Complex. This reprocessed spent fuel would provide about 25-30 kg of weapons-grade plutonium, or enough for about five to six nuclear weapons. North Korea has also been operating a 5 MW(e) reactor in Yöngbyön since late February 2003. This reactor can produce enough plutonium for about one bomb per year. However, there is no evidence that North Korea has shut down the reactor to discharge the spent fuel and reprocess it into plutonium. North Korea has two larger nuclear reactors (50 MW(e) and 200 MW(e)) that were under construction but frozen under the 1994 Agreed Framework. These reactors, if completed, could provide enough plutonium for about 37-50 nuclear bombs per year.<sup>7</sup>

North Korea also has a uranium enrichment program, but there is no evidence that North Korea has a large-scale uranium enrichment facility in operation. In the 1980s, North Korea began to acquire dual-use items that could be applied to a uranium enrichment program,<sup>8</sup> but North Korea is probably still years away from operating a full-scale uranium enrichment facility, even though it can apparently produce uranium hexafluoride.<sup>9</sup> North Korea appears to have pursued its uranium enrichment program more aggressively in the late 1990s after becoming dissatisfied with the implementation of the Agreed Framework.

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<sup>6</sup> Pak Ch'an Su, "Pukhan 'mi'gug'un chikchöptaehwa'e nasöyahanda," *Hankyoreh Shinmun*, February 11, 2005, <http://www.hani.co.kr/section-003100000/2005/02/003100000200502111731143.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel A. Pinkston and Stephanie Lieggi, "North Korea's Nuclear Program: Key Concerns," Center for Nonproliferation Studies, February 12, 2003, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/keycon.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Daniel A. Pinkston, "When Did WMD Deals Between Pyongyang and Islamabad Begin?" Center for Nonproliferation Studies, October 28, 2002, <http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/week/021028.htm>;

<sup>9</sup> Daniel A. Pinkston, "Foreign Assistance and Procurement for the North Korean Nuclear Program," *Asian Export Control Observer*, April 2004, pp. 19-21, [http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/observer/asian/pdfs/aeco\\_0404.pdf](http://cns.miis.edu/pubs/observer/asian/pdfs/aeco_0404.pdf).

The intelligence community is divided over whether North Korea has assembled its fissile material into nuclear bombs, and it is uncertain whether North Korea has miniaturized any weapons that could be loaded onto a North Korean delivery vehicle. If miniaturized into nuclear warheads, North Korea could deliver its bombs with Hwasŏng-5, Hwasŏng-6, Nodong, and Paektusan-1 (Taepodong-1) ballistic missiles.

#### North Korean Ballistic Missiles

| NK Name<br><i>Alternate Name</i>          | Range<br>(km) | Payload<br>(kg) | Inventory Estimate                                   |
|---|---------------|-----------------|--|
| Hwasŏng-5 (火星-5)<br><i>Scud-B</i>         | 300           | 987-989         | 27 TELs* (total)<br>Over 500 "Scuds"<br>of all types |
| Hwasŏng- (火星-6)<br><i>Scud-C</i>          | 500           | 770             | 27 TELs (total)<br>Over 500 "Scuds"<br>of all types  |
| Unknown<br><i>Scud-D</i>                  | 700           | 500             | 27 TELs (total)<br>Over 500 "Scuds"<br>of all types  |
| Unknown<br><i>Nodong</i>                  | 1,000         | 700             | At least 10 TELs<br>About 175-200                    |
| Paektusan-1 (白頭山-1)<br><i>Taepodong-1</i> | 2,200         | ?               | <10 in underground<br>silos?                         |
| Unknown<br><i>Taepodong-2</i>             |               |                 | Under development                                    |

\*Note: Transporter-erector-launcher (mobile launcher).

Source: NTI North Korea Country Profile, [http://www.nti.org/e\\_research/profiles/NK/Missile/62.html](http://www.nti.org/e_research/profiles/NK/Missile/62.html).

The North Korean Air Force has a number of fighter-bombers and bomber aircraft that could potentially deliver nuclear bombs, but their ranges are very limited and North Korea has no in-flight refueling capability. Moreover, it is unlikely that North Korea has miniaturized its weapons sufficiently for delivery by aircraft, and North Korean aircraft would be highly vulnerable to air defense systems in South Korea, Japan and surrounding international waters.

#### **Transfer of Nuclear Weapons or Fissile Material to States or Non-State Actors**

The possibility that North Korea might transfer nuclear weapons or fissile material to states or terrorist groups is a major concern of the United States and its allies. This fear has increased with recent reports that North Korea could have exported uranium hexafluoride (UF<sub>6</sub>), the feedstock for gas centrifuges, to Libya prior to Tripoli's decision to abandon its nuclear weapons program in December 2003.<sup>10</sup> However, exporting UF<sub>6</sub> and exporting nuclear weapons or fissile material are two different things, and our assessment is that North Korea is unlikely to export nuclear weapons or fissile material at

<sup>10</sup> David E. Sanger and William J. Broad, "Tests Said To Tie Deal On Uranium To North Korea," *New York Times*, February 2, 2005, p. 1; Glenn Kessler and Dafna Linzer, "Nuclear Evidence Could Point To Pakistan," *Washington Post*, February 3, 2005, p. A18, in Lexis-Nexis, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.

this time. If North Korea expands its production capability and increases its fissile material stockpile, the marginal domestic value of the fissile material will decline and the likelihood of export will increase.

First, North Korea's current stockpile of fissile material is relatively small and extremely valuable if the North Korea leadership is convinced it needs a nuclear deterrent. Second, the risk and cost of exposure after transferring nuclear weapons or materials would be high, and North Korean leaders are unlikely to accept these risks or potential costs. Third, North Korea has renounced terrorism and has not engaged in terrorist activities for almost two decades. Critics argue that terrorist groups have acquired North Korean conventional arms, but Pyongyang is more likely to hold onto its small number of nuclear weapons for its own defense. Therefore, the probability of transfer is low, but cannot be completely discounted, and contingency plans should be available for such a development.

### **The U.S. Response**

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice called the decision by North Korea "an unfortunate move...because it only deepens the North Korean isolation from the rest of the international community."<sup>11</sup> White House Press Secretary McClellan downplayed the announcement, saying that "we've heard this kind of rhetoric from North Korea before."<sup>12</sup> In response to North Korea's allegation that the United States is seeking to topple the regime, Secretary Rice said, "The North Koreans have been told by the president of the United States himself that the United States has no intention to attack or invade North Korea. The North Koreans have been told that they can have security assurances on a multilateral basis. Those security assurances will of course include the United States, if they are prepared to take a definitive decision to dismantle their nuclear weapons programs and to do so in a way that is verifiable."<sup>13</sup>

The White House has so far rejected North Korea's demand for bilateral talks, instead emphasizing the Six-Party Talks as the only way to resolve the crisis diplomatically. White House Press Secretary Scott McClellan said, "It's not an issue between North Korea and the United States. It's a regional issue. And it's an issue that impacts all of its neighbors."<sup>14</sup> McClellan added, "There's [sic] plenty of opportunities for North Korea to speak directly with us in the context of the Six-Party Talks."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Nicholas Krlev, "North Korea Admits to Having 'Nukes'," *Washington Times*, February 11, 2005, <http://washingtontimes.com>.

<sup>12</sup> "Press Gaggle with Scott McClellan aboard Air Force One En Route Raleigh, North Carolina," The White House, Press Release, February 10, 2005, <http://www.whitehouse.gov>.

<sup>13</sup> "Remarks With European Union President Jean Asselborn, European Union High Representative and Secretary General Javier Solana, and European Union External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner," United States State Department Press Release, February 10, 2005, <http://www.state.gov>.

<sup>14</sup> Deb Riechmann, "U.S. Refuses One-On-One North Korea Talks," Associated Press, February 11, 2005, <http://www.ap.org>.

<sup>15</sup> "US Rejects One-on-one Talks with North Korea," Agence France Presse, February 11, 2005, Lexis-Nexis, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.

## The Chinese Response

North Korea's announcement that it has produced nuclear weapons and that it is withdrawing from the Six-Party Talks puts China in a difficult position. The timing of the statement at least allows Beijing to save some "face," since it was issued prior to a planned Chinese envoy's visit to North Korea and places the blame on Washington and, to some extent, Tokyo as well. But Pyongyang's abrupt announcement also preempts Beijing's options to mediate.

China's Foreign Ministry spokesman responded to the latest development by reiterating China's long-held position of seeking a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and indicating that Beijing hopes the Six-Party Talks will continue.<sup>16</sup> China seems to have anticipated this dramatic turn of events, as it cautioned the United States not to publicize the reported North Korean transfers of nuclear materials to Libya even as senior U.S. National Security Council officials were hand-delivering a letter from President Bush to Chinese President Hu Jintao earlier in the week. But this still happened, right in the midst of China's one-week holiday marking the Lunar New Year.

Yet Beijing has much to worry about, both with respect to its own reputation and also of the broader ramifications for regional security. China's more proactive diplomacy over the last two years, first as the convener of a trilateral meeting and then as the host of the Six-Party Talks, is not producing the desired results. Beijing knows that the key to any resolution of the Korean nuclear issue will remain North Korea and the United States. In that respect, Beijing at most can provide good offices but nothing more.

Pyongyang's announcement that it now has nuclear weapons is also a slap on the face for Beijing. While most U.S. and official western statements and analyses have long held that North Korea possesses the fissile materials for about six to eight nuclear weapons, China has yet to officially acknowledge this and indeed has raised issue with U.S. assertions, in particular after the intelligence debacle on Iraqi WMD capabilities.

Perhaps the most worrisome aspect of the ongoing crisis is its impact on regional security, especially on the potential reactions from Japan, whose recent military activities are of deep concerns to China. However, Beijing's options are limited and any course of action could have potential negative trade-offs. China could express its impatience by subtly applying economic pressure, as it did two years by cutting off the oil supplies for a couple of days to North Korea. It could also indicate its neutrality towards any U.S. proposal to bring the issue before the UN Security Council for possible economic sanctions. The problem is that these actions probably would not bring about the desired results, and could possibly further escalate tensions. Indeed, should these actions be adopted, China is likely to endure the consequences, including but not limited to massive

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<sup>16</sup> "Report: N. Korea Demands Talks with U.S.," *China Daily*, February 11, 2005, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-02/11/content\\_416187.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-02/11/content_416187.htm).

flows of refugees, disruption of its economic ties with the region's key partners, and a post-conflict environment not entirely to Beijing's liking.

### **The South Korean Response**

The Roh Mu Hyon government has consistently viewed a nuclear North Korea as unacceptable, but Seoul has continued Roh's "peace and prosperity policy" of engagement with Pyongyang. The most visible result of this engagement, which started under former President Kim Dae Jung, is the opening of the Kaesŏng Industrial Complex in North Korea in December 2004. Economic exchanges between the two Koreas have increased recently but Seoul could reassess its policy following North Korea's nuclear declaration. The South Korean government fully supports the Six-Party Talks for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue in a peaceful manner. President Roh reaffirmed his support for the talks in a telephone conversation with President Bush on February 5, 2005.<sup>17</sup>

The North Korean announcement came as South Korea's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Ban Ki Moon was arriving in Washington, D.C. Ban said that South Korea will not tolerate North Korean nuclear weapons and that this policy will not change.<sup>18</sup> A spokesperson for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade later issued a statement asserting the South Korean government "deeply regrets the North declared an indefinite postponement of its participation in the Six-Party Talks."<sup>19</sup> The statement also affirmed that North Korea's nuclear program will not be tolerated.

### **The Japanese Response**

The North Korean Foreign Ministry statement on February 10<sup>th</sup> accused Japan of "servilely [sic] following the United States and...obstinately clinging to a hostile policy toward our Republic."<sup>20</sup> Pyongyang's declaration that it is indefinitely suspending participation in the Six-Party Talks and that it possessed nuclear weapons will serve to further complicate Japanese-DPRK relations, which recently had become increasingly strained over the abduction issue. In December 2004, DNA tests on remains given to a Japanese delegation in November 2004 by Pyongyang revealed that the remains were not those of a Japanese abductee, Megumi Yokota, as North Korea had claimed.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "6 Chahoidam chosok kaech'oi'dwaeya," ch'ŏng'wadae saesosik, Office of the President, Republic of Korea, February 5, 2005, <http://www.president.go.kr>.

<sup>18</sup> "(LEAD) Seoul's Position Not to Tolerate N. Korea's Nukes Remains Unchanged," Yonhap News Agency, February 10, 2005, <http://english.yna.co.kr>.

<sup>19</sup> Spokesperson, South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, "Comments by the Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the Statement of the North Korean Foreign Ministry," February 10, 2005, <http://www.mofat.go.kr/en/index.mof>.

<sup>20</sup> "DPRK FM: DPRK 'Manufactured' Nuclear Weapons, To 'Suspend' 6-Way Talks for 'Indefinite Period'," Korean Central Broadcasting Station (Pyongyang), February 10, 2005, in FBIS Document ID: JPP20050130000003.

<sup>21</sup> "Remains Not Yokota's, Japan to Mull Sanctions on N. Korea," Kyodo World Service, December 8, 2004, in FBIS Document ID: JPP20041208000112.

Pyongyang rebuked the Japanese government's claim and called the DNA tests a scam.<sup>22</sup> In response, Japanese authorities stated that the test gave irrefutable evidence that the remains were not those of Yakota, but of two unknown individuals.<sup>23</sup> In reference to this latest controversy, the North Korean Foreign Ministry statement on February 10<sup>th</sup> remarked, "How can we sit across from Japan in one place and hold talks with it when it is saying it will nullify the DPRK-Japan Pyongyang Declaration and will not normalize diplomatic relations while going so far as to fabricate the false remains issue over the abductions issue, which has already been settled completely?"<sup>24</sup>

The reaction of the Japanese government to North Korea's statement has been cautious. Prime Minister Koizumi told reporters that Japan would focus on resuming the Six-Party Talks and continue to pressure North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons. However, Koizumi also commented that Japan would continue to apply pressure on North Korea to settle the abduction issue.<sup>25</sup> The issue of Japanese abductees has played heavily on Japanese public opinion with regards to relations with Pyongyang since Kim Jong Il's revelation in 2002 that North Korea had abducted 13 Japanese citizens. In recent weeks, Japanese politicians and commentators have pressured the Japanese government to place sanctions on Pyongyang as a means to pressure North Korea to fully disclose what happened to the abductees.<sup>26</sup> Five abductees were allowed to return to Japan in 2003, and Pyongyang claims the other eight are deceased.

In response to North Korea's declaration that it possesses nuclear weapons, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hiroyuki Hosoda reminded reporters during a press conference that North Korea had previously made outlandish statements and then followed-up by revealing its true intentions. Hosoda stated that Pyongyang "has made similar announcements in the past. We need to closely examine North Korea's true intentions."<sup>27</sup> He concluded that Tokyo "will have to watch the development for a little longer."

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<sup>22</sup> "Japanese Ultra-right Conservatives' Anti-DPRK Racket under Fire," Korean Central New Agency, December 23, 2004, <http://www.kcna.co.jp>.

<sup>23</sup> "Japan rebuts N. Korean Criticism over DNA Tests," Kyodo World Service, February 10, 2005, in FBIS Document ID: JPP20050110000108.

<sup>24</sup> The Pyongyang Declaration was signed by Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi and North Korea's National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong Il in September 2002. The full text of the declaration is available on the Japanese Foreign Ministry website, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n\\_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/n_korea/pmv0209/pyongyang.html).

<sup>25</sup> "Japan Watching N. Korea's Intentions in Suspending Nuke Talks," Kyodo World Service, February 10, 2005, in FBIS JPP20050210000078.

<sup>26</sup> "Yomiuri Says Japan's Economic Sanctions on DPRK 'Viable, Practical Option'," *The Daily Yomiuri*, January 30, 2005 in FBIS JPP20050130000003.

<sup>27</sup> "Japan Watching N. Korea's Intentions in Suspending Nuke Talks," Kyodo World Service, February 10, 2005, in FBIS JPP20050110000078.

## The Russian Response

Russia's official response to North Korea's February 10<sup>th</sup> declaration of its possession of nuclear weapons and withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks has been one of "regret."<sup>28</sup> Russian media reports have emphasized the shift from a "nuclear capability" to "nuclear weapons" in the North Korean statement, although they have also cited North Korea's claim to have deployed these weapons for "self-defense" and "deterrence."<sup>29</sup> Russian news articles on the North Korean statement typically note North Korea's expressed desire to return to the talks if the Bush administration drops its threats. In explaining the Korean Peninsula crisis to their readers, Russian journalists have discussed the sharp changes in U.S. policies under President Bush and the U.S. decision (as typically reported) to back out of the Agreed Framework. None of the recent articles mentioned details of North Korean cheating or the intricacies of the suspected uranium enrichment program. Yet, one reporter noted the extreme restraint shown by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice (whom he called "the steel magnolia") in responding to the recent North Korean announcement. He commented that this response was "uncharacteristic."<sup>30</sup> But the same article also noted ominously that these developments are taking place on Russia's own border and mean a ratcheting up of a crisis that before could have led to war, and now could lead to nuclear war.

Alexander Zhebin of the Korean Research Center of the Institute of the Far East in Moscow, quoted by the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, said that the DPRK leadership has concluded that further talks with the United States are "pointless."<sup>31</sup> In his view, Pyongyang now believes that the Bush administration is seeking regime change in North Korea. Zhebin described Pyongyang's past aims in the Six-Party Talks as two-fold: reducing the U.S. threat to the DPRK and obtaining access to international financial credits. The administration's actions, Zhebin argued, have made Kim Jong Il decide that these goals are unobtainable. Talks on North Korea's activities, he concluded, will now have to be refocused—from trying to halt a nuclear weapons program to trying to prevent the *export* of nuclear technology and weapons.

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<sup>28</sup> Russian Foreign Ministry press spokesman Alexander Yakovenko quoted in "Severnaya Koreya 'pokazala zuby' Bushu" (North Korea Shows Its Teeth to Bush), *Pravda*, February 10, 2005, <http://news.pravda.ru/abroad/2005/02/10/72506.html>.

<sup>29</sup> See reports by Interfax, February 10, 2005, and RIA Novosti, February 10, 2005, from the *Moskovskie Novosti* website, <http://www.mn.ru/main.php?id=33685>. See also, "KNDR vyshal iz shestistoronnikh peregovorov po svoey 'yadernoi probleme'" (DPRK leaves the Six-Party Talks on its "nuclear problem"), *Izvestiya*, February 10, 2005, <http://www.izvestiya.ru/world/article1181406>.

<sup>30</sup> Vladimir Skosyrev, "Chistoserdechnoye priznaniye Kim Chen Ira" (A Frank Statement by Kim Jong Il), *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, February 10, 2005, [http://www.ng.ru/world/2005-02-11/6\\_kndr.html](http://www.ng.ru/world/2005-02-11/6_kndr.html).

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*



## **Military Options<sup>32</sup>**

Three main issues are routinely identified as the key elements involved in successful military strikes against nuclear facilities in North Korea:

1. Locating all nuclear weapons and/or facilities and fissile material stocks that could be used in a nuclear weapons program;
2. Having the capability to destroy these targets; and
3. Preventing full-scale North Korean conventional retaliation, further escalation, or the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons against U.S. military bases in the region or against U.S. allies.

Some of North Korea's nuclear facilities have already been located, and together they comprise critical elements in Pyongyang's ability to produce and reprocess plutonium for use in nuclear weapons. However, while it has been deemed unlikely to have secret nuclear reactors, North Korea might possess secret reprocessing facilities, which could be hidden underground or in caves to increase both their secrecy and protection from attack.

Furthermore, no North Korean uranium enrichment facilities have been conclusively located, although some suspected sites have been identified. While very little is known about North Korea's uranium enrichment program, in general such facilities can be housed in relatively small areas, including in underground facilities, which are difficult to locate and destroy.

When assessing the capability of the United States to destroy North Korea's nuclear facilities, North Korea's possible ability to repel such an attack must also be taken into account. With Mig-23 and Mig-29 fighters, SA-2 and SA-5 surface-to-air missiles, and large quantities of anti-aircraft artillery (AAA), North Korea's air defenses are considered reasonably adequate. However, American stealth fighters and bombers armed with precision-guided munitions, as well as cruise missiles would be highly effective against facilities that are located in the open. Therefore, North Korea's reactors, fuel fabrication facilities, and the reprocessing facilities for producing plutonium would be relatively easy to destroy.

But facilities that are unknown or undetected obviously cannot be destroyed. The use of underground and buried facilities presents an additional difficulty to U.S. military planners. The wide-ranging use of tunneling and hardening by North Korea to protect its military infrastructure, and presumably its secret nuclear facilities and storage sites, makes an attack on them with conventional weapons difficult, even if their locations were ascertained by the United States.

The third key element in any military operation aimed at successfully destroying North Korea's nuclear facilities is the one that generates the most concern, both militarily and

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<sup>32</sup> For a more detailed analysis, see Phillip C. Saunders, "Military Options for Dealing with North Korea's Nuclear Program," Center for Nonproliferation Studies, January 27, 2003, <http://cns.miis.edu/research/korea/dprkmil.htm>.

politically. North Korea's counter to such an attack might not be confined to American bases and warships in the region. North Korean retaliation against Seoul, which lies within range of DPRK artillery, would be devastating. Additionally, North Korea is believed to have between 500-700 Scud missiles capable of delivering both conventional and chemical warheads throughout South Korea. Japan, a key U.S. ally in the region, lies within range of over 175-200 North Korean Nodong missiles. And over 70 percent of North Korea's army ground units are located within 150 km of the demilitarized zone dividing North and South Korea. Finally, the option of nuclear retaliation by the DPRK must be taken seriously.

While the United States would ultimately win such a war, one U.S. military estimate concluded that U.S. and South Korean forces might suffer 300,000-500,000 casualties within the first 90 days of fighting, in addition to hundreds of thousands of civilian casualties. Politically, the outcome of such a military operation would be equally disastrous. Much like the war in Iraq, pre-emptive U.S. military action would engender a great deal of international opposition to U.S.-led efforts in the world. North Korea might possibly use its missiles and threats to skillfully divide the United States politically from its key allies in the region. Additionally, the U.S. launch of a pre-emptive strike on one of China's oldest allies and the prospect of tens of thousands of refugees forging the Yalu (Amnok) River into China might make Beijing side politically, and maybe once again militarily, with North Korea.

### **Diplomatic and Containment Options**

If the Six-Party Talks collapse, the international community will have to decide how best to deal with Pyongyang's status as a *de facto* nuclear power. A number of options are available to the United States and the international community including:

- Increasing diplomatic pressure against Pyongyang;
- A UN Security Council resolution;
- Imposing economic sanctions; and
- Increasing counter-proliferation activities aimed at Pyongyang (such as stopping and boarding North Korean ships, as set forth in the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative or PSI)

Washington will likely seek an increase in diplomatic pressure, particularly from the other participants in the Six-Party Talks. However, this will probably not be sufficient to resolve the current crisis. There are a number of obstacles to imposing UN sanctions against North Korea, which Pyongyang has declared an "act of war." Since North Korea has withdrawn from the NPT, Pyongyang is not technically violating any international commitments, and it is unclear that China and Russia would support such measures. Furthermore, while Japan might cooperate, economic sanctions will have little or no effect without the full participation of China and South Korea, which is unlikely at this time.

If Tokyo joins Washington in adopting stronger measures against Pyongyang, this could have the negative effect of splitting the United States and Japan from the other parties in the Six-Party Talks. The United States could step up counter-proliferation activities initiated under the PSI with the aim of cutting off North Korea's ability to trade in WMD-related materials. With North Korea having declared it possesses nuclear weapons, the United States and other PSI members will have an increased incentive to halt this trade. As a result, there could be an increase in maritime patrols and search and seizure operations in East Asian waters. However, Beijing and Seoul could object to these actions out of concern that they would antagonize Pyongyang.

### **Prospects for the Six-Party Talks**

North Korea declined to participate in a fourth round of Six-Party Talks that had been scheduled for September 2004. Pyongyang was waiting for the outcome of the U.S presidential election in November and wanted to assess any possible changes in Washington's policy towards Pyongyang given the personnel changes in Bush's second term. North Korea has been particularly sensitive to rhetoric by senior administration officials that depicts the DPRK or its leaders negatively. In particular, North Korean officials have cited comments made by Secretary of State Rice during her Senate confirmation hearings whereby she described North Korea as an "outpost of tyranny."<sup>33</sup>

There had been widespread speculation that Pyongyang would accept another round of talks following the Lunar New Year holiday and the celebration of Kim Jong Il's birthday on February 16<sup>th</sup>. A U.S. House delegation led by Representative Curt Weldon returned in January after a four-day visit to North Korea with the view that Pyongyang was prepared to return to the Six-Party Talks soon.<sup>34</sup> There was more reason for optimism given North Korea's request for 500,000 tons of fertilizer from South Korea on January 13<sup>th</sup>.<sup>35</sup>

Given the U.S. refusal to engage in bilateral dialogue and the practical alternatives, the United States, North Korea, and other participants will have little choice but to return to the Six-Party Talks. The lack of trust between Washington and Pyongyang continues to be the greatest obstacle to a diplomatic settlement, even though an agreement that leaves all parties better off appears to exist. The United States and North Korea will signal their resolve in the short-term and look for wavering on the other side. This will delay another round of talks, but the other four parties will pressure Washington and Pyongyang to return to the bargaining table. The talks are unlikely to collapse completely unless North Korea conducts a nuclear test, but this is also unlikely unless the United States responds with greater pressure or displays its intention to respond militarily.

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<sup>33</sup> Condoleezza Rice, Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, January 18, 2005, in Lexis-Nexis, <http://www.lexis-nexis.com>.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Faiola, "N. Korea Says It's Ready to Resume Nuclear Talks; In Meetings with U.S. Congressmen, Government Says U.S. Must Drop Its 'Belligerent Manner'," *Washington Post*, January 15, 2005, A15.

<sup>35</sup> Ryu Jin, "N. Korea Asks for 500,000 Tons of Fertilizer," *Korea Times*, February 6, 2005, <http://times.hankooki.com/times.htm>.