

Excerpt from “Dealing With North Korea’s Nuclear Programs

Recommended Citation

"Excerpt from “Dealing With North Korea’s Nuclear Programs”, NAPSNet Special Reports, July 27, 2004, <https://nautilus.org/napsnet/napsnet-special-reports/excerpt-from-dealing-with-north-koreas-nuclear-programs/>

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Special Report: July 27, 2004

Excerpt from "Dealing With North Korea's Nuclear Programs

by James A. Kelly

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I. Introduction

This statement by Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James A. Kelly was made to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee on July 15th. The statement summarized publicly for the first time the seven-page U.S. proposal presented to North Korea at the most recent Beijing negotiations.

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official

policy or position of the Nautilus Institute. Readers should note that Nautilus seeks a diversity of views and opinions on contentious topics in order to identify common ground.

II. Statement by James A. Kelly

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Statement by James A. Kelly

The U.S. Proposal

The proposal the U.S. presented was developed in close coordination with the Republic of Korea and Japan. Under the U.S. proposal, the D.P.R.K. would, as a first step, commit to dismantle all of its nuclear programs. The parties would then reach agreement on a detailed implementation plan requiring, at a minimum, the supervised disabling, dismantlement and elimination of all nuclear-related facilities and materials; the removal of all nuclear weapons and weapons components, centrifuge and other nuclear parts, fissile material and fuel rods; and a long-term monitoring program.

We envisage a short initial preparatory period, of perhaps three months' duration, to prepare for the dismantlement and removal of the D.P.R.K.'s nuclear programs. During that initial period, the D.P.R.K. would:

- provide a complete listing of all its nuclear activities, and cease operations of all of its nuclear activities;
- permit the securing of all fissile material and the monitoring of all fuel rods, and;
- permit the publicly disclosed and observable disablement of all nuclear weapons/weapons components and key centrifuge parts.

These actions by the D.P.R.K. would be monitored subject to international verification.

At this juncture, I'll emphasize that, for the D.P.R.K.'s declaration to be credible and for the process to get underway, the North would need to include its uranium enrichment program and existing weapons, as well as its plutonium program. As of now, the D.P.R.K. is denying that it has a program to enrich uranium, and it speaks of an existing "nuclear deterrent" but has refrained from stating publicly that it has "nuclear weapons."

Under our proposal, as the D.P.R.K. carried out its commitments, the other parties would take some corresponding steps. These would be provisional or temporary in nature and would only yield lasting benefits to the D.P.R.K. after the dismantlement of its nuclear programs had been completed. The steps would include:

- upon agreement of the overall approach, including a D.P.R.K. agreement to dismantle all nuclear programs in a permanent, thorough and transparent manner subject to effective verification, non-U.S. parties would provide heavy fuel oil to the D.P.R.K.
- upon acceptance of the D.P.R.K. declaration, the parties would:
- provide provisional multilateral security assurances, which would become more enduring as the process proceeded. North Korea's rhetoric on this issue notwithstanding, I would like to point out that it is reasonable to conclude that security assurances given through the multilateral Six-Party process would have considerably more weight than would bilateral assurances;
- begin a study to determine the energy requirements of the D.P.R.K. and how to meet them by non-

nuclear energy programs;

- begin a discussion of steps necessary to lift remaining economic sanctions on the D.P.R.K., and on the steps necessary for removal of the D.P.R.K. from the List of State Sponsors of Terrorism. Secretary Powell told the D.P.R.K. Foreign Minister, at the ASEAN Regional Forum in Indonesia on July 2, that the U.S. proposal aimed to move forward on the dismantlement of the D.P.R.K.'s nuclear programs, and that there is an opportunity for concrete progress.

The D.P.R.K. Proposal

The D.P.R.K. proposal restated its goal of a freeze for rewards, including energy assistance, lifting of sanctions, and removal from the list of countries sponsoring terrorism. We are continuing to study the North's proposal. As I noted, it is clear we are still far from agreement.

Our initial assessment is that the D.P.R.K. proposal lacks detail and is vague on a number of key elements. The scope is narrow in terms of the facilities covered and it ignores pre-2003 plutonium, nuclear weapons, and the uranium enrichment program. North Korea would exclude the IAEA from verification, seeking to create a new verification regime from the Six-Party talks participants. This unprecedented approach would be hard to set up and carry out.

Still, there are some positive elements in positions the D.P.R.K. staked out. The D.P.R.K. claimed that the freeze would be the first step on the path to nuclear dismantlement, not an end to itself, and on that point we agree.

The D.P.R.K. also confirmed that whatever would be included in the freeze would also be included in the commitment to dismantlement further down the line.

Specifically, the D.P.R.K. said it would freeze all facilities related to nuclear weapons and the products that resulted from their operation, refrain from producing more nuclear weapons, transferring them, and testing them. The D.P.R.K. delegation clearly identified the 5-MWe reactor as a nuclear weapons facility. While they said they wanted to maintain a civil nuclear program, they also acknowledged that most of their nuclear programs are weapons-related.

We and other parties have questions about the D.P.R.K. proposal, including what the scope of the freeze and dismantlement would be. Again, inclusion of the D.P.R.K.'s uranium enrichment program is critical. We will continue to seek answers through the Six-Party process, though we have made clear all along that we are not talking for the sake of talking and that we expect tangible progress to be made. To that end, the parties agreed to hold the fourth round of talks by the end of September and a working group meeting in the interim as soon as possible to prepare for the fourth round.

North Korea's Choice

Mr. Chairman, the Six-Party talks offer North Korea the opportunity to improve its relations with the United States and Japan, to end its self-induced political and economic isolation, and to harness the benefits of normal international trade and aid, including establishing relationships with the international financial institutions.

We have outlined what is necessary to transform our relations with the D.P.R.K., just as we have with another nation long isolated in the international community, Libya.

President Bush in his February 11th remarks to the National Defense University called on other governments engaged in covert nuclear arms programs to follow the affirmative example of Libya. The Libyan case demonstrates, as President Bush has said, that leaders who abandon the pursuit of

weapons of mass destruction and their delivery means will find an open path to better relations with the United States and other free nations. When leaders make the wise and responsible choice, they serve the interests of their own people and they add to the security of all nations.

We have discussed Libya's example with our North Korean counterparts, and we hope they understand its significance.

Of course, to achieve full integration into the region and a wholly transformed relationship with the United States, North Korea must take other steps in addition to making the strategic decision to give up its nuclear ambitions. It also needs to change its behavior on human rights, address the issues underlying its appearance on the U.S. list of states sponsoring terrorism, eliminate its illegal weapons of mass destruction programs, put an end to the proliferation of missiles and missile-related technology, and adopt a less provocative conventional force disposition.

Against the backdrop of the Six-Party talks, the D.P.R.K. is undertaking measures in response to its disastrous economy. It is too soon to evaluate the nature or impact of these steps, but we hope they will serve as a foundation upon which to build improved economic relations with other countries in the future. By addressing the world's concerns about its nuclear programs and other issues, the D.P.R.K. would have both new resources and opportunities to pursue policies for peaceful growth in the region that is already perhaps the world's most vibrant, East Asia.

The international community ultimately will gauge the results of the Six-Party talks to assess the seriousness of the D.P.R.K.'s professed willingness to give up its nuclear weapons programs. Although I remain optimistic on where the talks could lead, I personally could not say at this point that the D.P.R.K. has indeed made the strategic calculation to give up its nuclear weapons in return for real peace and prosperity through trade, aid and economic development. My hope is that the serious and extensive discussions with the United States, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China and Russia will convince the D.P.R.K. that a truly denuclearized Korean peninsula is its only viable option.

I believe that diplomacy is the best way to overcome North Korea's nuclear threat and that the Six-Party process is the most appropriate approach. Our aim is to fully and finally resolve the nuclear problem, not to implement half measures or sweep the problem under the rug for future policy makers to deal with. We are pursuing this course patiently and are committed to its success.

That concludes my statement, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. DeTrani and I look forward to responding to your questions.

III. Nautilus Invites Your Responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this essay. Please send responses to: bscott@nautilus.org. Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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