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## The Agreed Framework with the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea

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*Note: Opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied in this paper are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University, the Department of Defense or any other government agency.*

The Agreed Framework Between the United States and the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea (DPRK) is in our interest because, if it is carried out, it will eliminate the North Korean nuclear weapons program. If unchecked, this program threatens two key U.S. interests stability in Asia and checking the spread of nuclear weapons.

The stability of Asia is critical to U.S. security and prosperity. The foundation of Northeast Asia's economic growth and political stability is security, and the linchpins of security have been our commitment to our defense relationships with South Korea and Japan. North Korea's long-standing challenge to security and stability in Northeast Asia acquired a more ominous dimension with the emergence of a major North Korean nuclear weapons program.

Since the early 1980s, North Korea has operated a large nuclear complex, chiefly at Yongbyon. U.S. intelligence believes that the purpose of the complex is the production of weapons grade plutonium. In addition to a small 5 MW(e) reactor in operation since 1985, a 50 MW(e) and a 200 MW(e) reactor are under construction.

We estimate that the DPRK nuclear program had generated enough plutonium for one or two nuclear weapons and was poised to leap forward in terms of plutonium production. The North Korean program represented an unacceptable threat to the United States' and our allies' interests for a number of mutually-reinforcing reasons:

- An unchecked nuclear capability in the North, coupled with its oversized conventional force, could be used for extortion or blackmail against the ROK as well as greatly increasing the costs of a war in Korea.

- A nuclear arsenal in North Korea could ignite a nuclear arms race in Asia generally.
- Failure to curb North Korean efforts would undermine the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards system.
- North Korea could export nuclear technologies and components to pariah states or terrorists worldwide.
- With upgraded missile delivery systems, which the North is developing, the nuclear threat could project across most of Northeast Asia.

The DPRK signed the NPT in 1985, entered into a safeguards agreement with the IAEA in January 1992 and agreed with the ROK in 1992 to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula. Despite these obligations, in 1989 the DPRK defueled its 5 MW(e) reactor and reprocessed the fuel. In 1992 the DPRK refused to cooperate with the IAEA to clarify the amount and disposition of the plutonium from that load of fuel. The DPRK remained out of compliance with its NPT and IAEA obligations up to mid-1994.

Talks aimed at the resolution of the problem faltered. In 1993 North Korea announced it would withdraw from the NPT and then suspended its withdrawal. In June 1994 the DPRK defueled its reactor for the second time and refused to allow the IAEA to take steps that could have helped shed light on the amount of plutonium removed during the earlier defueling. It declared it would end its IAEA safeguards agreement, refuel the reactor, and reprocess the spent fuel. In light of these threats, acts, and the lack of progress in bilateral talks, the United States, in cooperation with the ROK and other allies and friends, took steps to obtain a UN Security Council sanctions resolution on the DPRK.

North Korea declared that sanctions were, in its view, an act of war. In light of the DPRK's massive conventional capability and its threats e.g. to turn Seoul into "a sea of fire" we augmented our defensive capability, and in consultation with the ROK, considered a wide range of options for additional force augmentations.

We continued to believe, however, that a diplomatic solution was preferable to sanctions and their consequences. In June 1994 former President Carter reached agreement with President Kim Il-sung that the North would freeze its program temporarily and return to negotiations in Geneva. After several months, the United States and DPRK signed an Agreed Framework on October 21, 1994.

This agreement forms the basis of resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula. It is an agreement based on action, not trust. If for any reason the DPRK fails to live up to the Framework, we retain the option of returning to the UN for sanctions and employing additional military readiness enhancements.

Under the Agreement, the North must stop (and eventually dismantle) its nuclear weapons related program and resolve past discrepancies. In return, the DPRK will receive alternative energy sources,

initially bunker oil for electric generators and heat, and later more proliferation-resistant light water reactor (LWR) technology. The Agreement has these key features:

- The immediate shutting down and eventual dismantling of the North's graphite-moderated reactor program;
- Full compliance by the DPRK with its obligations under the NPT and its IAEA safeguards agreement before any nuclear components are delivered; Controlling the spent nuclear fuel already in North Korea by first preventing its being reprocessed, then stabilizing it for storage, and then removing it from the DPRK;
- Alternate energy for North Korea in the form of annual shipments of heavy fuel oil in amounts sufficient to offset the 255 MW(e) of electrical power and thermal heat lost through shutdown of the three graphite-moderated reactors;
- The formation of an international consortium to provide two proliferation-resistant light water reactors to replace the current graphite-moderated facilities. The ROK and Japan will provide the bulk of the funding.

[Verified Steps in the Elimination of North Korea's Nuclear Program](#)(100k graphic)

[North Korean Alternatives](#)(100k graphic)

The process of normalizing diplomatic and trade relations between the DPRK and the rest of the world has begun with small steps, taken as the Agreed Framework is implemented, to exchange diplomatic offices and address trade and sanctions issues. It requires restoration of dialogue between North and South Korea, together with the United States, with the objective of denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula and, eventually, reaching a peaceful conclusion of the Korean War.

The Framework Agreement goes well beyond the requirements of the NPT by requiring the North to completely dismantle its nuclear production program and place all fissile material under IAEA safeguards. Further, it provides for strict international monitoring of DPRK compliance at all stages. Under the agreement, North Korea is required to take, and has taken, critically important steps before getting any benefit from the United States or other countries. Specifically, to date the DPRK has:

Because the actions are so striking an improvement over past North Korean secrecy, it's worth pointing out that North Korea has permitted IAEA inspectors to remain permanently at Yongbyon with access to the reactor construction site at Taechon to implement the freeze, and verify and monitor, on a daily basis, that the freeze remains in effect. In addition, the North has permitted a U.S. technical team to visit the Yongbyon complex to do surveys of measures necessary to stabilize the spent fuel so it can be stored until removed from North Korea, as required by the agreement. Removal will start when the first nuclear components for the LWRs begin to be delivered. Obviously, continued vigilance will be necessary, and

we expect some more or less serious bumps in the road during implementation. But the critical first step of compliance for the DPRK has been accomplished a verified freeze on the North Korean nuclear program.

Our responsibilities under the first step were to deliver 50,000 metric tons the first of annual supplies that will eventually reach 500,000 metric tons of heavy residual fuel oil to North Korea, a responsibility we met on January 21, 1995. We took other required steps including limited relaxation of trade controls.

Our next milestone is to formulate the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) to begin work on the LWR project. Once the plant structure for the first LWR is completed, and before any nuclear components for the reactor are delivered, the North will have to allow the IAEA to conduct special inspections of the two waste sites in question, resolve questions about past plutonium production, and come into full compliance with the NPT and fullscope safeguards requirements.

Only when this is done will KEDO deliver and begin to install the nuclear components of the first LWR. At that point, the North must commence shipping the spent fuel rods from their 5 MW(e) reactor out of the country for reprocessing and safe storage. Only when all the spent fuel has been expatriated will KEDO complete and deliver LWR #1. Simultaneously with the completion and delivery of LWR #1, the DPRK will begin to disassemble and destroy their graphite-moderated reactors and associated facilities. LWR #2 will not be completed until the last of the North's nuclear weapons related facilities are completely dismantled. As the LWRs operate, North Korea will be required to export the spent fuel.

Nothing depends on trust our performance will be based on their performance. If they don't perform, we can and in my view we must go back to sanctions, military enhancements, and international pressure.

We face only two real choices regarding the North Korean nuclear weapons program. Our choice is the agreed deal. Under the Agreed Framework the DPRK's nuclear program is halted, the IAEA resolves the nuclear past, spent fuel with 25 to 30 kilograms of plutonium is removed from the country, and the graphite-moderated nuclear weapons related facilities are dismantled.

The other choice is, without an agreement, the cycle of generating and reprocessing plutonium is repeated, expanded, and repeated again and again until the DPRK becomes a nuclear power producing dozens of nuclear weapons every year. We simply could not let this happen.

The benefits to us and to the world of peacefully ending the North Korean nuclear weapons program far outweigh the costs of the benefits North Korea will derive particularly when compared with the alternative, which would be a return to sanctions and the risk of war, or acquiescing to an uncontrolled nuclear weapons program.