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Research in Progress describes ongoing PASCC research. For more information, please contact pascc@nps.edu.

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The Near-Miss Case of Taiwan's Historical Nuclear Proliferation: Countering Proliferation via Diplomacy, Intelligence, and Verification

Performer: Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS)
Project Lead: David Albright
Project Cost: \$105,246
FY16–17

Objective:

Taiwan's covert push during the 1990s toward developing nuclear weapons is an important, but relatively unknown, near-miss case of historical nuclear weapons proliferation that was thwarted by strong diplomacy, intelligence gathering, and international verification. The Taiwan case is relatively unknown and its lessons are unexplored except in a very few published writings, none of which have had access to the collection of documents and materials that ISIS has. This project will contribute to scholarship on Taiwanese history and the dynamics of nuclear proliferation by making public a large body of significant, currently unpublished historical documents and data related to the Taiwan case. The project will investigate the historical case of Taiwan's efforts at producing nuclear weapons in order to utilize time-sensitive sources to build a thoroughly documented case history for future scholars, as well as to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the motivations and constraints affecting countries' pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Approach:

This project will draw on ISIS's unrivaled set of documentation, news stories, declassified government cables and estimates, and unpublished manuscripts on the Taiwan proliferation case. This research will detail, review, and draw out lessons from the historical case of Taiwan's close call at producing nuclear weapons. The results of the study will assemble and make public information from U.S. and IAEA officials who were directly involved in this case. The PI will produce a substantial paper that draws lessons from this case and applies them to other potential cases of proliferation in the Middle East and East Asia.

NPS Center on Contemporary Conflict