

Press Statement
Richard Boucher, Spokesman
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October 16, 2002

North Korean Nuclear Program

Earlier this month, senior U.S. officials traveled to North Korea to begin talks on a wide range of issues. During those talks, Assistant Secretary James A. Kelly and his delegation advised the North Koreans that we had recently acquired information that indicates that North Korea has a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of the Agreed Framework and other agreements. North Korean officials acknowledged that they have such a program. The North Koreans attempted to blame the United States and said that they considered the Agreed Framework nullified. Assistant Secretary Kelly pointed out that North Korea had been embarked on this program for several years.

Over the summer, President Bush -- in consultation with our allies and friends -- had developed a bold approach to improve relations with North Korea. The United States was prepared to offer economic and political steps to improve the lives of the North Korean people, provided the North were dramatically to alter its behavior across a range of issues, including its weapons of mass destruction programs, development and export of ballistic missiles, threats to its neighbors, support for terrorism, and the deplorable treatment of the North Korean people. In light of our concerns about the North's nuclear weapons program, however, we are unable to pursue this approach.

North Korea's secret nuclear weapons program is a serious violation of North Korea's commitments under the Agreed Framework as well as under the Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), its International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement, and the Joint North-South Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

The Administration is consulting with key Members of Congress, and will continue to do so. Under Secretary of State John Bolton and Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly are traveling to the region to confer with friends and allies about this important issue.

The United States and our allies call on North Korea to comply with its commitments under the Nonproliferation Treaty, and to eliminate its nuclear weapons program in a verifiable manner.

We seek a peaceful resolution of this situation. Everyone in the region has a stake in this issue and no peaceful nation wants to see a nuclear-armed North Korea. This is an opportunity for peace loving nations in the region to deal, effectively, with this challenge.

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<http://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2002/14432.htm>