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United States Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

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DPRK NUCLEAR STATUS

Since November 1994, the North's nuclear program has been frozen. This covers the reprocessing plant and small plutonium production reactor at Yongbyon. The North has also halted construction of its two larger and more powerful reactors. The IAEA has been instrumental in implementing the Framework, maintaining a constant presence at Yongbyon since mid-1994. (U)

North Korea may have enough plutonium for one or possibly two nuclear weapons. A principal goal of the Framework is to enable the IAEA to complete its historical audit of the North's nuclear program to determine empirically how much plutonium the North produced. If the Framework is not implemented successfully, the North would have access to several more bombs-worth of plutonium from the spent reactor fuel now in the cooling pond at Yongbyon. Under the Framework, the fuel will be disposed of in a way that does not involve reprocessing in the DPRK. US contractors, working with North Korean technicians, have "canned" about 50% of the fuel. (U)

Despite the progress in canning, DOE contractors complain that the North's cooperation has been uneven and that American technicians have had to do most of the canning. The North shut down the operation in November after the ROK suspended the light water reactor (LWR) project. The North views the canning operation as its best leverage to ensure progress on the LWR project. (U)

The IAEA has complained that the North is refusing to cooperate in preserving historical documentation and other evidence the IAEA believes it will eventually need to verify North Korea's nuclear declarations. The IAEA does not think the North is currently destroying data, but it wants to ensure that key documents and waste products are preserved for later analysis. The North acknowledges an obligation to preserve "history," but it is concerned that IAEA officials are trying to dig up historical data under the guise of preserving it. (SBU)

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