

Sanctions Against North Korea Infuriate U.S. Allies, Risk War

by Kathy Wolfe

The United States, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union agreed on Nov. 14 to suspend fuel oil shipments to North Korea starting in December, as a demand that Pyongyang “promptly eliminate its nuclear weapons program in a visible and verifiable manner,” the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) announced in a New York statement. The four powers make up the Executive Board of KEDO, created in 1994 to run the Clinton Administration’s “Agreed Framework” for economic cooperation and peace with Pyongyang.

The oil suspension, and KEDO’s statement that “other KEDO activities with North Korea will be reviewed,” constitute the start of new economic sanctions against North Korea. Washington extremists led by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have been demanding sanctions for a month, using as the excuse a Pyongyang statement that it is “entitled” to have a uranium weapons program (text below). The real intent, however, is to halt the South-North Korean drive to

build the Trans-Korean Railroad, launched in September, which could complete the New Silk Road from Tokyo and Pusan to Paris, and cause an economic superpower to emerge across Eurasia (see *EIR*, Sept. 27). Under Rumsfeld’s new National Security doctrine, the rise of such a new economic power itself is paranoically seen as a threat to the United States.

Furious South Korean and Japanese officials said their countries were “dragged” into signing the statement after the U.S. National Security Council and President Bush on Nov. 13 announced that Washington had suspended oil shipments to Pyongyang. The U.S. KEDO representative, State Department Ambassador Jack Pritchard, “demanded the agreement in the strongest terms,” an Asian diplomat told *EIR*, “almost as a condition of our alliance. With thousands of American troops in our country, what could we do?” South Korea tried to dissent, which would have wrecked the required “consensus,” but at the end, KEDO Chairman South Korean Ambassador Chang Sun-Sup was made to read the confrontational statement to the press.

Diplomats have warned for weeks that this action could bring the United States and North Korea back to the brink of war, just as in 1994, when, as the Nov. 18 *New Yorker* magazine reports, the Pentagon prepared a full war plan, starting with a pre-emptive strike against Pyongyang. “Most people don’t know how close we came to war,” writer Donald Oberdorfer and former U.S. Seoul Ambassador Donald Gregg warned a Nov. 13 Washington meeting, following a Pyongyang trip. “And if we don’t resolve this situation soon, it could get just as dangerous, and we’ll be in one hell of a mess.”

Calculated War Gamble

The sanctions are deliberately calculated by Rumsfeld, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz, and other “Utopians” who have abandoned sound traditional American military thinking, to provoke North Korea into restarting its Yongbyon plutonium reactor, which was mothballed in the 1994 KEDO agreement. Then, North Korea would be “caught red-handed” producing not only enriched uranium, but also plutonium, for a bevy of bombs—so their thinking goes. This would give the civilian nuts at the Pentagon and warhawks in the Congress such as Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.) and Rep. Chris Cox (R-Calif.) all the excuse they need to create an enormous



U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld led the drive to slap sanctions on North Korea, in pursuit of his Utopian military doctrine, which cannot tolerate “peace breaking out” on the Korean Peninsula.

hue and cry—or worse.

Despite several statements by President Bush that the United States has no intention of attacking North Korea, the Nov. 13-14 developments show that the Utopians are certainly not totally reined in. Even if they are only playing “Dr. Strangelove” nuclear brinksmanship, the Korean Peninsula, where 30 million people live within 30 miles of the demilitarized zone, is simply no place for this.

With peace breaking out in Korea until recently, how is all of this explained? Certainly, no one in Washington talks about the Trans-Korean Railway. The excuse for this insane turn of events was a Pyongyang summit on Oct. 3-5 with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly, at which North Korea had planned to request a broad new opening of relations with Washington (see “North Korea Offers U.S. a Silk Road Bargain,” *EIR*, Nov. 1). “The North Koreans thought Kelly had come with an olive branch,” Ambassador Gregg said on Nov. 13, “but in fact he had come to have a confrontation, and they were shocked.” Kelly, he said, handed Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-Ju a one-sided demand to close down a secret enriched uranium program the United States said it had found—“or else.”

The next day, the North Koreans came back, and again asked to broaden relations, but made a statement later issued in public by their Foreign Ministry on Oct. 25, Gregg said. The statement, which Kang read to Kelly, charges that “the Bush Administration listed the D.P.R.K. [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea] as part of the ‘axis of evil’ and a target of the U.S. pre-emptive nuclear strikes.” For this reason, “the D.P.R.K. is entitled to possess not only nuclear weapon but any type of weapon more powerful than that so as to defend its sovereignty and right to existence from the ever-growing nuclear threat by the U.S. . . .

“Nevertheless, the D.P.R.K. . . . clarified that it was ready to seek a negotiated settlement of this issue on the following three conditions: Firstly, if the U.S. recognizes the D.P.R.K.’s sovereignty, secondly, if it assures the D.P.R.K. of non-aggression, and thirdly, if the U.S. does not hinder the economic development of the D.P.R.K. If the U.S. legally assures the D.P.R.K. of non-aggression, including the non-use of nuclear weapons against it by concluding such a treaty, the D.P.R.K. will be ready to clear the former of its security concerns,” the statement said.

Unilateral Demands

This statement, that Pyongyang is “entitled” to have nuclear weapons, but would prefer an extensive new peace treaty, was interpreted by Kelly as “an admission of an illegal uranium program”—period, Minister Kang later complained to Ambassador Gregg. The whole other side of the bargain Pyongyang was offering was blacked out. Yet, Gregg said, by offering to “clear America of its security concerns,” Pyongyang has made it plain that it is ready and willing to open all nuclear programs to inspection. They simply want a two-way street, in which the United States agrees to negotia-



Former U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Donald Gregg, recently returned from a visit to Pyongyang, reports that the North Korean offer to “clear America of its security concerns,” in exchange for a U.S. pledge of non-aggression, was completely ignored by the U.S. side.

tions and non-aggression at the same time.

The KEDO statement, however, is a 100% one-way street, with no room for compromise or negotiation. Its message is that North Korea must surrender all bargaining chips before the United States will even consider talking; that the U.S. will penalize North Korea immediately if not; and that in addition, Washington will do whatever it takes to force South Korea and Japan to also slash ongoing economic relations. The KEDO board agreed:

- “To condemn North Korea’s nuclear weapons program, which is a clear and serious violation of the Agreed Framework” and many other treaties listed;
- “North Korea’s program . . . threatens regional and international security and undermines the international non-proliferation regime based on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty,” and other treaties;
- “North Korea must promptly eliminate its nuclear weapons program in a visible and verifiable manner” and “North Korea’s future relations with the United States, the European Union, South Korea, and Japan hinge on the complete and permanent elimination of its nuclear weapons program”;
- “Heavy oil deliveries will be suspended, beginning with the December shipment. Future shipments will depend on North Korea’s concrete and credible actions to dismantle completely its highly enriched uranium program. In this light, other KEDO activities with North Korea will be reviewed,” i.e., other sanctions will be taken soon.

Fundamental Disagreement

The fact that the new sanctions have been virtually rammed down the throats of America’s allies in the region could also explode unpleasantly at some point. During the first ten days of November, there was an enormous fight, when



South Korean President Kim Dae-jung opposed the cutoff of oil shipments to North Korea, but was forced to accept the policy by strong-arm tactics from the United States.

U.S. Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith toured Seoul and Tokyo to deliver Rumsfeld's demand for sanctions, with Ambassador Kelly in tow. The two insisted upon a drama on the high seas, by demanding that an oil tanker already under way to Pyongyang be turned around. They demanded that this and other sanctions be applied now, without further negotiations, unless North Korea unilaterally surrender all nuclear materials. They met with refusal in both Asian capitals.

"President Kim Dae-jung has made it clear that South Korea is opposed to halting oil shipments, arguing that imposing economic sanctions on the North would be counterproductive," the *Korea Times* reported on Nov. 8. "'Stopping the construction of nuclear reactors and provision of heavy fuel oil to the North shouldn't be an option for resolving the current standoff. . . . These economic sanctions will likely lead to a repeat of the nuclear crisis in the early 1990s,'" they quoted President Kim as saying.

Feith told South Korean Defense Minister Lee Jun and Foreign Minister Choi Sung-hong on Nov. 6 that "there should be a penalty, not a reward" for the North's nuclear actions, but he was roundly rebuffed, the Korean press reported. South Korean Unification Minister Jeong Se-hyun even accused the United States of deliberately distorting the Pyongyang statement. "It seems that D.P.R.K. Vice Foreign Minister Kang's remarks have been trimmed while they were being conveyed—as some of the clauses have been dropped off," he said. Lim Dong-won, the top aide on North Korea to President Kim, even suggested that the United States was trying to put the brakes on South Korea's and Japan's efforts to improve ties with the Pyongyang government.

Arriving in Tokyo on Nov. 7, Feith announced that "there was a 'fundamental disagreement' between the United States and South Korea over how to deal with the North's violation" of the nuclear deal, the *Korea Times* reported. Feith then demanded sanctions against Japanese Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi, Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba, and other offi-

cials on Nov. 8, because, as he said, "It's important that the North Koreans understand that there is a price to be paid for violating their commitments." Again Feith was rebuffed.

In a Nov. 11 Blue House meeting with Japanese Minister Kawaguchi, President Kim publicly repeated his objection to sanctions. "North Korea is facing difficulties economically and politically, but is making efforts in its own way to become a member of the international community," Kim said, adding that "Japan, South Korea, and the U.S. need to cooperate so that North Korea will become a member of the international community, and that it is important to aim at a peaceful resolution on the issue."

Threats to Japan

Kim and Kawaguchi on Nov. 11 said jointly and in public that Korea and Japan insist on the continuation of the KEDO Framework as originally signed by President Clinton, under which the oil and other goods must continue to be shipped to Pyongyang, in return for the mothballing of the Yongbyon plutonium reactor. Kawaguchi told reporters that Japanese support for South Korea's "Sunshine Policy" toward North Korea is firm, and that Japan will uphold the Japan-North Korea "Pyongyang Declaration," the bottom line of which is peaceful negotiations and eventually a peace treaty.

"Senior South Korean and Japanese officials meanwhile Nov. 7 held a meeting in Tokyo to coordinate their opposition to U.S. confrontation with Pyongyang," the *Korea Times* noted, and the officials told a briefing afterward that the shipments of heavy fuel oil to North Korea should be continued; the next shipment is already on its way. The two nations also agreed that the construction of two light-water reactors should not be put on hold "under any circumstances," said South Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Lee Tai-sik and Hitoshi Tanaka, director general of the Asian and Oceania Bureau of the Japanese Foreign Ministry. They met with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Kelly in Tokyo on Nov. 9 and told him this flatly.

Feith also didn't mince words in threatening the Japanese about what he called an immediate North Korean threat to bomb Japan. "Japan is facing a serious danger of a ballistic missile attack," Feith threatened in a Tokyo press conference on Nov. 7. Feith again demanded that North Korea should "pay the price" for its nuclear program and be slapped with economic sanctions by the United States, Japan, and South Korea.

Feith denied a charge in Japan's conservative *Yomiuri News* that he is trying to "blackmail" Tokyo into deploying the Pentagon's insane Theater Missile Defense pop-gun system. Tokyo has so far stopped short of moving the project to a development stage, out of desire not to anger China and other Asian nations. "We are not pressing Japan to do anything. It is not the way we deal with our allies," Feith told reporters in Tokyo. "There is a common understanding that the missile threat facing Japan and the United States is serious."