

Attacks on Sovereignty Disrupt Korean Election

by Kathy Wolfe

The new U.S. National Security Directive #17, released Dec. 10, “emphasizes the threat of a U.S. pre-emptive nuclear strike against Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Libya among other countries,” reports the *Washington Post*, and is part of a global strategy by the “Utopian” faction in Washington. The Utopians, including Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, are an extremist minority promoting global war, not always successfully. Since a combined intervention by what Lyndon LaRouche described as “the institution of the U.S. Presidency” and by international forces, has for the time being put the brakes on their drive to hit Iraq, they are anxious to regain momentum.

But in Korea, despite President George Bush’s repeated statements that he seeks a diplomatic and peaceful resolution of conflict with the North, release of this “hit list” and related provocations against Pyongyang have escalated nuclear tensions and threatened to disrupt the hotly contested Dec. 19 South Korean Presidential election. The race between President Kim Dae-jung’s “Sunshine” policy of rapprochement, and the opposition’s policy of confrontation, is easily influenced by such dramatic media events.

On Dec. 11, the day after Rumsfeld’s hit list was published, a U.S.-led flotilla in the Indian Ocean fired on and then seized a North Korean ship in international waters, acting on U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency satellite data that the ship might have been transporting missiles to terrorists in the Middle East. “North Korea is the largest proliferator of missiles and ballistic missile technology on the face of the Earth,” said Rumsfeld, on tour in nearby Djibouti.

“Reckless aid to the North has allowed Pyongyang to build a nuclear program and weapons of mass destruction,” a spokesman of the opposition in Seoul said on Dec. 11, demanding an end to the Sunshine Policy.

In an embarrassment for Rumsfeld, the ship was released after Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh phoned Cheney and President Bush to protest that the U.S.-allied Yemen government had bought the missiles legitimately. But the hijacking, the “hit list,” and Washington’s Nov. 14 embargo of oil to North Korea, had already had the intended effect of kicking Pyongyang where it hurts: in their national sovereignty.

On Dec. 12, the North Korean Foreign Ministry announced that to replace the embargoed oil, they will “resume operation and construction of nuclear facilities necessary for electric power generation” at Yongbyon. The Yongbyon

reactor produces weapons-grade plutonium, and almost triggered a nuclear war until it was mothballed in a 1994 agreement, which the United States has broken with its oil embargo.

Deliberate Provocation

President Kim Dae-jung warned of just such danger Nov. 18, when he said that sanctions would only force the North to restart Yongbyon, and could “lead to another war on the Korean peninsula,” as *EIR* reported Dec. 13.

The Utopians have gotten, in fact, just what they wanted. In a Nov. 18 *Washington Times* interview, an unnamed “high administration official” thought to be Rumsfeld’s Undersecretary Paul Wolfowitz, said that the deliberate intent in cutting off the oil was to provoke Pyongyang to restart Yongbyon, to “isolate the regime in world opinion” and encourage “regime change.”

Visiting Beijing on Dec. 12, Undersecretary of State Richard Armitage said that the seizure of the ship sent a strong message, despite its release. “I think that the signal that was sent to Pyongyang is: ‘we know what you’re doing, we know where you are, you can’t hide.’” (But the Yemeni President’s protest had made clear, that the Pentagon had not, in fact, known what this North Korean ship was doing.)

Such statements are seen in Seoul as an attack on the national sovereignty of all Koreans. This was already a hot issue across South Korea, where in December a protest against U.S. troops skyrocketed after the court-martial acquittal of 2 GI’s who had crushed a pair of Korean schoolgirls with an armored vehicle. The real anger stems from Washington’s snubbing of the Sunshine Policy, and the “evil axis” speech, as *EIR* also noted Dec. 13.

“The U.S. seizure and unexpected release of a North Korean missile carrier has made the past two days an emotional roller coaster for South Korea, one week from the Dec. 19 presidential election,” the *Korea Times* complained Dec. 12. “Seoul officials were concerned the episode might affect the outcome of the election. In many past elections, North Korea has been a major factor, providing an opportunity for conservative candidates to rally voters based on fears. . . . The U.S. government would find [opposition candidate] Lee Hoi-chang easier to work with than [pro-government candidate] Roh Moo-hyun,” the *Korea Times* adds. “These circumstances were ample ground for speculation by Seoul political circles that Washington had stage-managed the incident in a bid to help the struggling Lee out. ‘I think that the latest incident will influence the election,’ a Seoul official noted privately, right after the seizure. Others expected the incident to pour cold water on growing anti-American sentiment in South Korea and make irrelevant the calls for the withdrawal of U.S. troops, by forcing Koreans to realize the importance of the U.S. in protecting Seoul from the North.”

Re-opening the Yongbyon reactor, if North Korea does so, was also deliberately provoked to create yet another issue “to rally voters based on fears.”