
NORTH KOREA

In a discussion with the United States and China in Beijing on April 24, 2003, North Korean officials admitted for the first time that they possessed nuclear weapons. North Korean officials claim to have reprocessed and reproduced spent fuel rods and have threatened to begin exporting nuclear materials, unless the United States agrees to one-on-one talks with North Korea. Tension between the United States and North Korea have been running pretty stiff and high since early October of 2002. Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly informed North Korean officials that the United States was aware that North Korea had a program that was allowing them to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons. Initially North Korea denied this, but later confirmed the veracity of the US claim.

In confirming that they had an active nuclear weapons program, they also declared the Agreed Framework agreement. The Agreed Framework signed by the United States and North Korea on October 21, 1994 in Geneva agreed that: 1.) North Korea would freeze its existing nuclear program and agree to enhanced International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards. 2.) Both sides would cooperate to replace the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (D.P.R.K.) graphite-moderated reactors for related facilities with light-water (LWR) power plants. 3.) Both countries would move toward full normalization of political and economic relations. 4.) Both sides will work together for peace and security on a nuclear-free Korean peninsula. 5.) Both sides would work to strengthen the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

Beginning in the 1960s, the Soviet Union supplied various types of missiles, nuclear power technology, and training to North Korea. China began supplying North Korea with missile technology in the 1970s. The North Korean nuclear weapons program was officially up and running with full force in the 1980s. In the 1980s North Korea began to focus on practical uses of nuclear energy and the building of a nuclear weapon development system. In the 1985 US official announced for the first time that they had intelligence data proving that a secret nuclear reactor was being built north of Pyongyang near the small town of Yongbyon.