

Manila Daily: China, Russia Must Press N. Korea To Return to Negotiation Table (U)

SEP20090417001002 Manila The Manila Times Online in English 17 Apr 09 (U)

[Editorial: "Russia and China must press N. Korea to negotiate" (U)]

[OSC Transcribed Text]

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ALL the UN nuclear experts and inspectors of its International Atomic Energy Agency arrived from Pyongyang in Beijing on Thursday. They had been ordered to leave by North Korea (NK), which earlier had declared it would no longer participate in the 6-party talks on disarmament (read: making North Korea abandon its nuclear-arms ambitions). At the same time, Pyongyang also said it would now reactivate its nuclear weapons program.

UN International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors left the main site in the Yongbyon nuclear complex after switching off and/or removing surveillance cameras and their seals.

In 2008, when prospects were bright of North Korea and the other five countries--South Korea, China, Japan, Russia and the United States--reaching a happy turn in the 6-party negotiations, Kim Jong Il agreed to blow up parts of the Yongbyon complex. At that point, Pyongyang expected more generous aid and the removal of UN and Western sanctions. US President Bush removed NK from the US list of evil terrorist countries. Not too long after, though, negotiations soured and broke down. This, from the NK's viewpoint, was because the UN, the USA, Japan and South Korea were not abiding by agreements reached. The US, Japan and South Korea sides claimed the North had not really dismantled its nuke program.

Kim Jong Il's whims

This is not the first time NK has left the negotiation table. Every time it did so these last 15 years, it ended up getting more aid and money--amounting to billions of US dollars--from S. Korea, Japan and the USA. Each time, of course, it once more vowed to stop trying to develop nuclear weapons.

In the past seven years, the North Koreans have in a sense held the world hostage to Kim Jong Il's whims.

What makes the situation more dangerous this time is the possibility that Western and Israeli intelligence reports are true. These say that Pyongyang has

actually been all the while selling its technology to Iran and militant Arab countries, like Yemen. That technology is not only for the development of high-grade plutonium but also the rocket technology it demonstrated in last April 5's rocket launch.

That rocket firing, the North has maintained, had nothing to do with weaponry but purely to launch a satellite, an act which it said does not violate any international agreement or treaty. But the United Nations Security Council condemned the rocket launching just the same because the technology for sending satellites into orbit and firing missiles are similar. Previous UN Security Council resolutions bar North Korea from engaging in ballistic missile-related activity.

UN sanctions on North Korea

The North has been subject to several UN-adopted sanctions. These limit the North's ability to do normal commercial relations with the rest of the world. Its two long-lasting friends, Russia and China, dating back to the time when the Soviet Union and China were aggressively communist, have been vetoing more rigorous sanctions against it. Both have been moderating NK's anger against the West, obviously as long as doing so would serve their interests.

The whole world wishes to see Pyongyang go back to the negotiating table.

Only Russia and China can pressure the North to do so.

Sanctions don't work against NK

Sanctions only work when they deprive a country of something it cannot do without. North Korea has been such a world pariah that it is really not getting anything under normal means from any foreign country. It gets most of its needs from Russia and China, with whom it has unusually warm and tight historical bonds and, in the case of China, which is still ruled by a communist party, "fraternal ties" in addition.

Without Russia and China supporting the United Nations objective of making the North less intransigent and give up its nuclear-arms ambitions, Pyongyang will eventually become a nuclear-weapons power. And it will merrily cash in on that status by helping other countries also become nuke powers. There goes the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

China backed the UN condemnation of its ally and protege last week. At the same time as it voted for the Security Council resolution against the North, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Jiang Yu said, "We hope all parties could proceed from the long term and overall interest, exert calmness and restraint and properly handle relevant issues so as to devote themselves to safeguarding the 6-party talks." This was obviously a message to both Pyongyang and the USA,

Japan and South Korea--but not to Russia, which presumably shares most of China's views about Pyongyang.

Russia's ITAR-Tass News Agency quoted Russia's chief nuclear envoy, Deputy Foreign Minister Alexei Borodavkin, as saying that the "most important task" is to resume the talks and not to impose heavier sanctions on North Korea.

For years Pyongyang has shown an ugly, warlike face, especially to Japan and South Korea. And yet, both countries, especially the South, has been its source of considerably huge amounts of aid.

We hope the North has not become too big even for its patrons, Russia and China, to calm down.

[Description of Source: Manila The Manila Times Online in English -- Website of one of the Philippines' oldest privately owned newspapers that is widely read and respected; URL: <http://www.manilatimes.net/>]

Source Metadata (U)

Source Name: The Manila Times Online

Source Type(s): Internet

Source City: Manila

Source Country: Philippines

Source-Date: 04/17/2009

Source End Date: 04/17/2009

Language(s): English

Article Metadata (U)

Document ID: SEP20090417001002

Entry Date: 04/17/2009

Version Number: 01

Processing Indicator: OSC Transcribed Text

Precedence: Priority

Country: China, North Korea, Philippines, Russia, United States

Region: Asia, Eurasia, Americas

Sub-Region: East Asia, South East Asia, Russia, North Americas

International Organization: UN

Topic: INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL, PROLIFERATION, URGENT[0]

Media Metadata (U)

Program Title(s):

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