



Written by on September 25, 2008

North Korea Breaks Nuclear Agreement

“From here on, the IAEA inspectors will have no further access to the reprocessing plant,” said Olli Heinonen, the international agency’s top inspector. “[The North Koreans] plan to introduce nuclear material to the reprocessing plant” within a week. Melissa Fleming, a spokeswoman for the agency, reported: “There are no more seals and surveillance equipment in place at the reprocessing facility.”



The U.S. reaction, as expressed in a statement from U.S. National Security Council spokesman Gordon Johndroe, was: “These actions will only serve to further isolate North Korea at a time when the other six-party talks members are working to achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We strongly urge the North to reconsider these steps and come back immediately into compliance with its obligations.”

Some Bush administration officials called the North Korean move an attempt to exert diplomatic pressure and win concessions, especially financial aid the communist nation was promised in exchange for its cooperation in limiting its nuclear enrichment program. North Korea’s negotiators have complained that the Bush administration has not kept its promise to remove North Korea from its list of “state sponsors of terrorism.” As one administration official told the *New York Times*, on condition of anonymity: “They [North Koreans] don’t have a lot of ways to get leverage, and this is one of them.”

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who was in New York for the United Nations General Assembly session, has met with the foreign ministers of China, South Korea, and Russia. Their countries — along with the United States and Japan — have taken part in negotiations with the North Koreans. Rice said the communist state’s decision “would only deepen its isolation.” Rice continued: “Everyone knows what the path ahead is. The path ahead is for there to be agreement on verification protocol so that we can continue along the path of denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The North Koreans know that and so we’ll continue working with our partners on what steps we might need to take.”



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