

S h o u l d

the U.S. spend billions in missile defense to counter the North Korean missile threat?

The U.S. 2002 military budget was \$379 billion, 270 times higher than that of North Korea (\$1.4 billion). Moreover, North Korea's overall annual government budget is less than South Korea's annual military budget alone. Essentially, North Korea has barely the capacity to pose any real military threat to the U.S.

Moreover, the regime has taken important steps towards reducing any military threat they may pose to the rest of the world. The New York Times reported in early 2001, that according to former and current government experts, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il promised in confidential talks not to produce, test or deploy missiles with a range of more than 300 miles. North Korea also offered to halt the sale of missiles, missile components, technology & training if the U.S. was willing to compensate with cash and/or food aid. North Korea also expressed willingness to join the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), which would limit the sale and deployment of missiles that have a range of more than 180 miles.

On January 12, 2001, former president Bill Clinton told Reuters news agency that Bush was likely to complete a deal wherein North Korea would agree to stop producing and selling ballistic missiles in exchange for foreign assistance in launching satellites. Clinton said: I think it will be one of their first achievement because it is set and I think it will happen. Later in May, 2001, Kim Jong Il promised a moratorium on missile testing until at least 2003 during a meeting with European Union delegation leader and Prime Minister of Sweden, Goeran Persson.

North Korea and Terrorism

The day after the September 11 attacks in New York City and Washington D.C, the North Korean foreign spokesperson joined the international community in sending condolences to the victims and expressing their opposition to acts of terrorism. One month later, North Korea signed two international anti-terrorism treaties. Contrary to mainstream American perceptions, this is not a new position for North Korea. In fact, North Korea had presented two joint anti-terrorism statements with the U.S. in October 6 and 12, 2000.

A Change in Policy

In March 2002, the Bush administration's Nuclear Posture Review (NPR) specifically named North Korea as a possible target for U.S. nuclear weapons, in contravention of the 1994 Agreed Framework Between the U.S. and N.K, wherein both parties pledged to make the Korean peninsula free from nuclear threat. That same month, the Bush administration refused to certify North Korea's compliance with the Agreed Framework, without providing any evidence of alleged violations. This clear change in approach puts North Korea's desire for normalizing diplomatic relations with the U.S. at serious risk.

What Can You Do?

Urge the two nations to pursue peace and reconciliation through diplomacy and not with threats of military aggression or rhetoric. A peace treaty has yet to be signed. Both parties must also abide by existing agreements to respect each nation's sovereignty and enhance bilateral relations towards peace in Asia. To learn more about this issue and to become involved, please contact Young Koreans United of USA.

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