

Will the P5+1 Iran Nuclear deal Crater because of Secret North Korean Cooperation?



Yesterday, I was on 1330amWEBY Northwest Florida Talk Radio with host Mike Bates discussing the extension of P5+1 negotiations with Iran on a political framework “understanding” into April 1st and the impasse. I brought up the prior Nuke deal with North Korea that failed, because of the presence on the State Department negotiating team of Wendy Sherman, Undersecretary of State for Political affairs. She had been involved with the Clinton era negotiations trying to halt North Korea’s nuclear weapons development with a deal involving the sale of light water reactors to replace heavy water plutonium reactors and supply of fuel oil during the transition period. The deal also addressed the export of missiles. It was all against the background of UN IAEA reports that the hermit kingdom had cheated. That so-called framework cratered during the Bush era in 2002. In 2006, the North Korean tested a nuclear device. The current impasse in the P5+1 nuclear negotiations seems like what baseball great Yogi Berra might call “déjà vu all over again.”

During our 1330am WEBY “Your Turn” we noted that the IAEA director general Yukio Amano had been frustrated by Iran’s refusal to tell of prior military developments., among them were development of so-called explosive nuclear triggers and miniaturized warheads. Then the matter of Iran’s ICBM development program, based largely on North Korean technology, came up, because Ms. Sherman told a Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 2014 that was off the table for discussions during the interim Joint Plan of Action. Subsequently, the Administration caved on these points.

In March 2014, we wrote a New English Review article, [“Has Iran Developed Nuclear Weapons in North Korea?”](#) We cited Sherman [saying](#) at the Foreign Relations Committee hearing in February 2014, “that if Iran can’t get the bomb then its ballistic missiles would be irrelevant.” In that article we interviewed my colleague Ilana Freedman about her sources on Iran North Korean nuclear cooperation. She noted:

According to my sources, Iran began moving its bomb manufacturing operations from Iran to North Korea in December 2012. Two facilities near Nyongbyon in North Pyongan province, some 50 miles north of Pyongyang, have become a new center for Iran’s nuclear arms program.

Over the last year, Iran has been secretly supplying raw materials to the reactor at Nyongbyon for the production of plutonium. At a second facility, located about fifteen miles north and with a code name that translates to ‘Thunder God Mountain’, nuclear warheads are being assembled and integrated with MIRV platforms. MIRVs are offensive ballistic missile systems that can support multiple warheads, each of which can be aimed at an independent target, but are all launched by a single booster rocket. Approximately 250-300 Iranian scientists are now reported to be in North Korea, along with a small cadre of IRGC personnel to provide for their security.

According to the reports, the Iranian-North Korean collaboration has already produced the first batch of fourteen nuclear warheads. A dedicated fleet of Iranian cargo aircraft, a combination of 747s and Antonov heavy-lifters, which has been ferrying personnel and materials back and forth between Iran and North Korea, is in place to bring the assembled warheads back to Iran.

Fast forward to today’s *Washington Free Beacon* (WFB) report by Adam Kredo, [“Experts: Iran Housing Nuke Materials in North Korea, Syria”](#). Kredo cites State Department Spokesperson

Marie Harf saying that proposition was “bizarre”. But then Ms. Harf is the person who suggested that a jobs for jihadis program would stop the flow of tens of thousands of foreign Muslim fighters traveling to join the holy cause of the Islamic State Caliphate. The *WFB* report had comments for North Korean watcher Gordon Chang and FDD’s Reuel Gerecht, Ali Alfoneh and Emmanuelle Ottolenghi suggesting that evidence of nuclear cooperation between North Korea , Syria Iran could spike the P5+1 nuclear deal. Witness these comments.

Gordon Chang:

“Let me see if I get this straight: The country with the world’s most highly developed technical intelligence capabilities does not know what has been in open sources for years?” Chang said. “No wonder North Korea transfers nuclear weapons technology to Iran and others with impunity.”

“The North Koreans could go on CNN and say, ‘Hey, Secretary Kerry, we’re selling the bomb to Iran,’ and the State Department would still say they know nothing about it,” Chang said. “No wonder we’re in such trouble.”

Reuel Gerecht:

It certainly appears that the administration has backed away from [previous military dimensions] questions,” Gerecht said. “The plan appears to be to let the [International Atomic Energy Agency] continue its so far fruitless effort to gain access to sensitive sites, personnel, and paperwork, but to keep these questions out of the talks.”

“The administration is doing this because it fears the Iranians would walk out,” he added. “Any military work revealed by the Iranians would prove the Supreme Leader and [President] Rouhani liars.

“The White House wants to believe that monitoring of known sites will be sufficient. It’s a bit mystifying given the Iranian track record and the CIA’s longstanding inability to penetrate the nuclear-weapons program (it’s just too hard of a target to do this reliably),” he explained. “But since they fear a breakdown, they bend their credulity in Iran’s favor. This has been the story of the negotiations from the beginning.”

Ali Alfoneh:

“I certainly think the Islamic Republic should come clean concerning its past record of nuclear activities: Did the Islamic Republic ever try to build a nuclear weapon? If not, how are we to understand the opaque references to Tehran-Pyongyang nuclear cooperation in the 1990s?” Alfoneh said.

“As long as the Islamic Republic does not provide a clear record of its nuclear activities in the 1980s and 1990s, and as long as we do not know the full scope of Tehran-Pyongyang nuclear cooperation, there is always the risk of the two states renewing that cooperation, which in turn would jeopardize any agreement the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 Group may reach,” he said.

Emanuele Ottolenghi:

“Syria’s current chaos makes it virtually impossible for inspectors to do their job even if the Syrians were compliant,” according to Emanuele Ottolenghi, a onetime advisor to foreign ministries in Europe.

“Syria has covered up its nuclear activities after the 2007 [Israeli Air Force] raid on Deir al-Azour,” he said. “After four years of inconclusive efforts, the [International Atomic Energy Agency] ended up deferring the issue to the [United Nations Security Council] after declaring Syria in non-compliance.”

We ended our March 2014 NER article with a question. "Who will be able to stop that dangerous development taking place in North Korea's hermit Kingdom? Who is best able to counter these threats in both Iran and North Korea?" That appears to be foremost from the minds of Secretary Kerry, Undersecretary Sherman and the President intent on perfecting a new paradigm of relations in the Middle East by pivoting to Iran. They appear not bothered by the facts and the national security implications of Iran with nuclear tipped ICBMs courtesy of North Korea.