

# **Return trip to North Korea**

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## Six visits helped us make an assessment



Jan. 2004 Yongbyon



Aug. 2005 Pyongyang



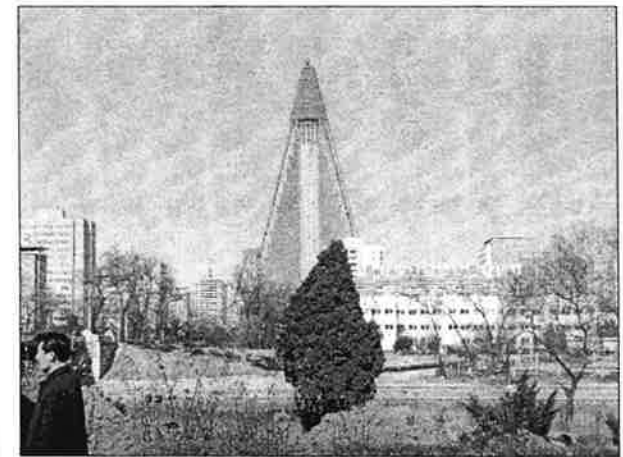
Nov. 2006 Pyongyang



August 9, 2007, Yongbyon



Feb. 14, 2008, Yongbyon



Feb. 27, 2009, Pyongyang

**They had a specific message for each visit**

# Status of Yongbyon plutonium program

- **5 MWe reactor - shut down, in standby**
  - No new plutonium being produced
  - No cooling tower, fresh fuel not ready
- **Reprocessing facility in standby**
  - All spent fuel reprocessed
  - No plutonium in the pipeline
- **Fuel fabrication facility**
  - Construction to convert to LWR fuel
- **50 MWe reactor being torn down**
  - 200 MWe at Taechon also not salvageable
- **Estimated plutonium inventory**
  - 24 to 42 kg (enough for 4 to 8 bombs)
  - Claimed that all of it is weaponized



**If North Korea really wants to enhance and improve its nuclear arsenal, it would restart and rebuild these facilities**

## Motivation and history of LWR for North Korea

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- **North Korea chose gas-graphite reactor design in '70s**
  - Poor for electricity, good for bombs (like early UK and France)
- **By 1980s realized difficulty of nuclear electricity supply**
  - 1985 agreement to get two Soviet LWRs - dashed by end of SU
- **1994 Agreed Framework**
  - U.S., ROK, Japan to provide two modern LWRs - unfulfilled
- **Aug. 2005 meeting with Vice Minister Kim Kye-gwan**
  - No LWR, no deal - referring to Joint Statement (signed 9/19/05)
- **Aug. 2007 meeting with VM Kim Kye-gwan**
  - U.S. can run the LWR, we won't enrich, won't reprocess
- **2009 decision after rocket and nuclear test and sanctions**
  - We'll do it alone - begin experimental LWR and enrichment

**The LWR has economic and symbolic importance**

Vice Minister Kim Kye-gwan (Feb. 2007)

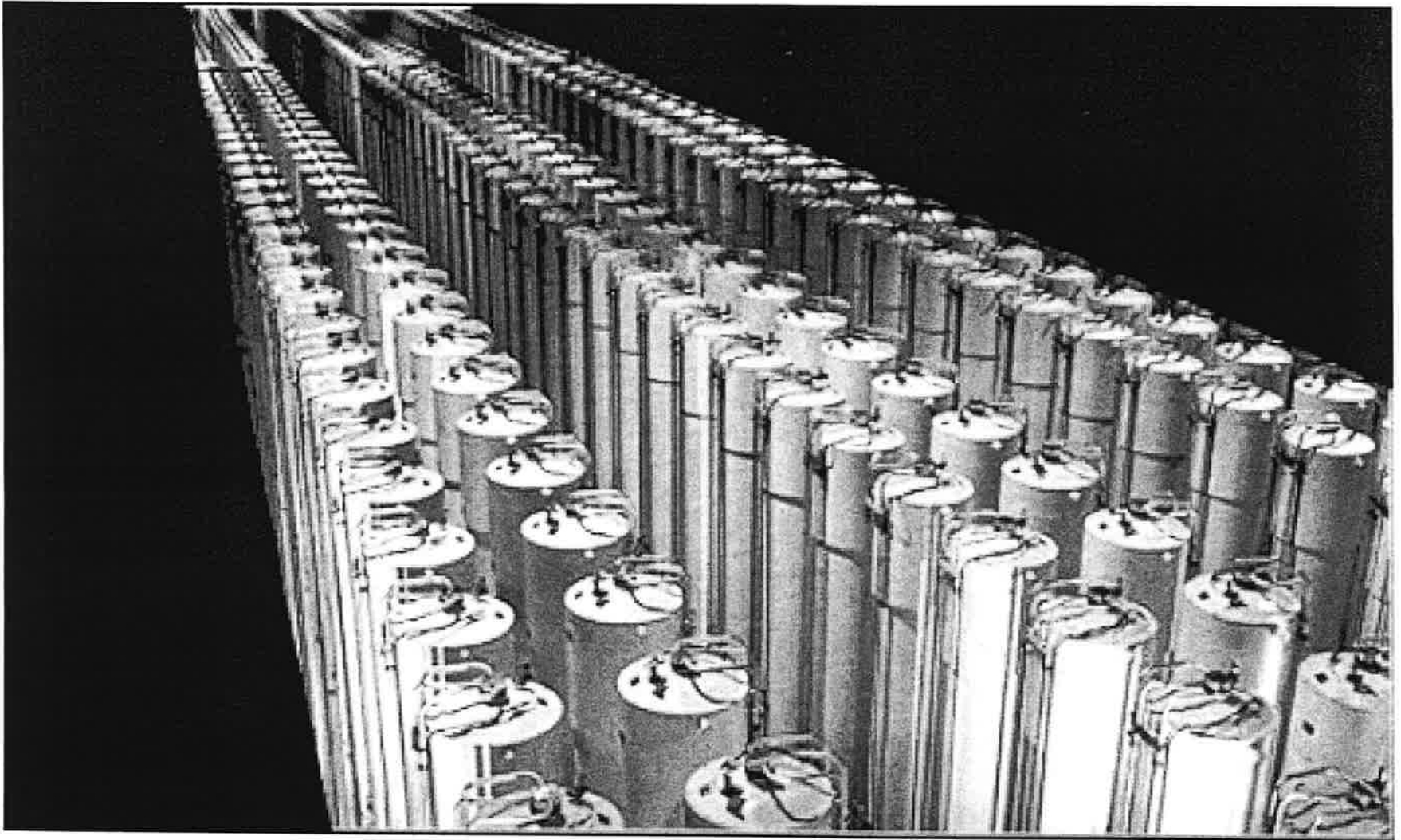
## **Experimental light-water reactor (LWR) construction**

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- **25 to 30 MWe (100 MW-thermal)**
  - We will start small, learn, then build a larger power reactor
- **Reinforced concrete containment shell started**
  - 22 m diam by 40 m high (excavation 7.1 m deep)
- **Steel pressure vessel**
  - To be manufactured indigenously
- **Two electrical generators for electricity**
  - Local communities and linked to national grid
- **Uranium dioxide (UO<sub>2</sub>) fuel pellets in cladding**
  - Not yet decided (either zircaloy or stainless steel)
- **Fuel to be enriched (LEU) to 3.5% U-235**
- **Target completion date - 2012 (I believe, unrealistic)**

**Their claim that Yongbyon is being converted to LWR and uranium enrichment is credible**

**Purely illustrative - this is not Yongbyon, but close to what we saw.**



Piketon, Ohio Centrifuge plant, 1984 (Department of Energy)

Several additional centrifuge lines were removed graphically to try to get this as close as possible to the centrifuge cascades we saw in Bldg. 4 at Yongbyon

## **Uranium enrichment program**

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- **2,000 centrifuges in a divided 100-meter cascade hall**
- **Centrifuges ~ 6 ft high by 8 in diameter**
- **Claimed to have steel rotors**
  - Likely maraging steel, hence P-2 (G-2) centrifuges
- **Through-put claimed at 8,000 kg SWU/year**
  - Capable of producing 2 tonnes LEU/yr (adequate for small LWR)
- **Claimed to be operating, producing LEU now**
  - We cannot confirm, but not inconsistent with what we saw
- **Modern control room**

**Facility and capacity is consistent with fuel requirements for experimental LWR**

# Dual-use problem

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- **Enriched uranium is required for LWRs**
  - If in good international standing, easy to obtain from suppliers
- **Same equipment, same technologies permit HEU**
  - The Iran problem - LEU can serve as cover for HEU
  - Breakout or parallel covert facilities allow HEU production
- **2,000 centrifuge cascades**
  - Can produce 2 tonnes/year of 3.5% LEU reactor fuel or
  - 40 kg of 90% bomb-grade HEU/year (enough for ~ 1 or 2 bombs)



# How does this change the security risk?

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- **Not much for the current capacity**
  - Much better off continuing to produce plutonium if they want bombs
  - Modern nuclear arsenals use plutonium
- **But, once demonstrated, could duplicate anywhere**
  - Small footprint and signature, difficult to detect
- **Number of facilities limited by materials and components**
  - High-strength steel, high-strength aluminum, etc.
  - Components - ring magnets, frequency converters, bearings, vacuum valves, molecular pumps, etc.
  - Indigenous manufacturing capability unknown, but questioned
- **Large HEU capability could lead to increased arsenal size**
  - Could become more like Pakistan arsenal
  - More sophisticated bombs require testing but plutonium is superior

## How did North Korea get enrichment and when?

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- **What we saw requires many years of development, manufacture and testing**
- **Most likely decades of R&D, procurement and training**
- **HEU particles in North Korea and UF<sub>6</sub> to Libya questions**
- **Current system likely built and tested outside Yongbyon**
- **Unlike the original reactors, centrifuges require help\***
  - Cooperation with Pakistan and A.Q. Khan since 1993
  - Included training of their technical specialist at Khan Research Lab
  - Supply of two dozen centrifuges by Khan around 2000
  - Complex web of procurement - i.e. aluminum from Russia & Germany
- **Possibly cooperation with Iran**

\* See D. Albright and P. Brannan, "Taking Stock: North Korea's Uranium Enrichment Program, ISIS, Oct. 8, 2010



## So, what to do now?

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- **Take threat seriously, but don't hype it**
- **Remember Perry process recommendation**
- Deal with North Korea as it is, not the way we'd like it to be
- **Do policy review to see what's changed since 2000**
- **Stay the course on denuclearization, but contain threat**
- **For now - three no's in return for one yes**
  - **No more bombs**
  - **No better bombs**
  - **No export**
- **Yes - address fundamentals of North Korea's insecurity**