

Former US Sec of Defense suggests Military action against North Korea

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EX-US DEFENSE CHIEF SUGGESTS MILITARY ACTION AGAINST NK

Former U.S. Defense Secretary William Perry proposed Thursday that the United States should consider military action against North Korea if China and South Korea refuse to prod Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons program, according to a report by Agence France-Presse (AFP).

Although the move is dangerous, there is no alternative left if China and South Korea, the two key economic lifelines to North Korea, do not join any U.S.-led "diplomatic coercive" action against Pyongyang, he told the Foreign Affairs Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C.

AFP quoted Perry, the Pentagon chief under former president Bill Clinton, as saying that the U.S. should consider destroying a large reactor under construction in North Korea capable of making about 10 nuclear bombs a year.

In addition to the Yongbyon reactor, which produces spent fuel that can be "reprocessed" to yield plutonium for a nuclear weapon, Pyongyang is reportedly building a large reactor in Taechon.

Perry was quoted as saying that the danger of the North Korean nuclear weapons program was by now obvious to China and South Korea and that they should be willing to join the U.S. in any concerted diplomatic initiative.

"An additional inducement for China and South Korea would be the concern that if they did not provide the coercion, the United States might take the only meaningful coercive action available to it _ destroying the reactor before it could come on line," Perry was quoted as saying.

"Clearly, this is a dangerous alternative," he said. "If China and South Korea do not agree to applying coercion, the United States may be forced to military action which, while it certainly would be successful, could lead to dangerous unintended consequences," he said.

But, he said, there were no alternatives left that were not dangerous.

“Allowing North Korea to move ahead with a robust program that is building 10 nuclear bombs a year could prove to be even more dangerous than exercising coercive diplomacy,” he said.

However, AFP quoted Daryl Kimball, executive director of the Arms Control Association, as saying that Perry was “being imprudent” when he suggested threatening bombing the North Korean nuclear facility.

“The reality is that the North Korean nuclear program is a grave security threat but threatening to bomb a reactor that is not yet completed could itself trigger a deeper crisis, impede diplomacy that still has the potential to free North Korea’s existing and still limited nuclear program,” he said.

Furthermore, Kimball said, a preemptive strike on any North Korean facility risked a war on the Korean Peninsula that was sure to take tens of thousands of lives in South Korea and among U.S. troops deployed there.

Together with China, South Korea, Japan and Russia, the United States has been involved in three years of six-party talks with North Korea aimed at disbanding its nuclear program but to no avail.

But Perry said the talks were necessary but not a sufficient condition for success.

The United States, he said, should return to these talks with a “viable negotiating strategy, which includes a credible coercive element, and which included significant buy-in from the other parties.”

“The most feasible form of coercion could come from the Chinese and South Koreans, who could threaten to cut off their supply of grain and fuel oil if North Korea does not stop work on the large reactor,” he said.

But this alternative has been resisted by the two nations.

North Korea agreed in principle during the six-party talks in September 2005 to abandon its nuclear weapons program in return for diplomatic, financial and security guarantees.

But it walked out in protest at U.S. financial sanctions imposed on a Macao bank accused of illicit dealings on behalf of Pyongyang and carried out its first nuclear test explosion on October 9 last year.

The talks resumed in December last year but ended in deadlock as Pyongyang insisted the financial sanctions be lifted before it would discuss nuclear disarmament.

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