Dear Leader
Inside the North Korean Nuclear Deal

To the Editors of Global Asia:

I have been able to obtain a TOP SECRET memo from Kim Gye Gwan, the head of the North Korean delegation to the Six Party Talks, to North Korean leader Kim Jung Il. The memo is dated February 12, one day before the joint agreement on North Korea’s nuclear disarmament was announced. I think the memo provides some insight into Pyongyang’s perception of the new agreement and long-term nuclear strategy.

Sincerely yours,

Gary Samore
Vice President and Director of Studies
Council on Foreign Relations
New York, New York
Dear Dear Leader,

Once again we are victorious. The ruthless Chinese thought they could stop us, but we tested right in their faces and they were too frightened to take strong counter measures. The arrogant Americans thought they could take your money and squeeze us to abandon our nuclear deterrent. Instead, they are forced to give back some money and accept a freeze that keeps our vital nuclear assets untouched. The brazen Japanese thought they could hold a nuclear deal hostage to their missing people, but they have ended up all by themselves. Thank goodness our generous but gullible Korean brothers keep sending cash and food no matter what we do.

The draft agreement we present for your approval is a sweet deal. All we have to do is shut down and seal the Yongbyon facilities under IAEA supervision within 60 days. To make sure the IAEA doesn’t try any of its old tricks to investigate our past activities, we have ensured that the agreement specifies that necessary monitoring and verification measures must be “agreed between the IAEA and DPRK.” As you know Dear Leader, shutting down the 5 MW reactor is no big loss. We already have enough plutonium for our national deterrent. We will put the spent fuel from the reactor, which contains enough plutonium for a bomb or two, into the storage pond to save for a rainy day, just like we did in 1994.

In exchange for shutting down Yongbyon, we get 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, paid for by the South Koreans. You will recall that this is the same price we got in 1994 to shut down the 5 MW reactor. This time, we have not specified how long the shutdown lasts. In the second stage of the agreement, we are supposed to provide a com-
complete declaration of our nuclear programs and disable all existing nuclear facilities in exchange for economic, energy, and humanitarian assistance up to the equivalent of one million tons of oil. You can rest assured that these negotiations will not be easy. If the Americans do not accept our demands, such as completion of the light water reactor project, we can always threaten to turn the 5 MW reactor back on and reprocess the spent fuel unless we get another 50,000 tons of oil. The South will pay to keep the peace.

Fortunately, the de-nuclearization working group will be chaired by China. We don’t trust them, but they know better than to support unreasonable U.S. demands for intrusive inspections and disarmament. However, if the Americans offer us enough compensation, we could decide to “disable” the 5 MW reactor, depending on what “disable” means. “Disable” is a much better word for us then “dismantlement,” which we had to accept in the 1994 agreement. We will work with Chief Engineer Li to design disablement measures that could be reversed in a pinch. Full declaration of our nuclear programs will be tricky because we will have to say something about the secret enrichment program, but the Americans are already signaling they will be satisfied if we declare the centrifuge stuff we bought a few years ago. We can give up this junk for a good price as long as we keep our plutonium bombs. You will notice, Dear Leader, that the new agreement does not explicitly require elimination of our existing plutonium stocks and bombs.

Of course, we can agree to the principle of de-nuclearization as long as we never have to do it. In 1994, we linked disarmament to the light water reactor project, but the crazy Americans actually succeeded in getting the project off the ground and we had to get centrifuges from Pakistan in case we were forced to dismantle our plutonium production facilities. We won’t make that mistake again. Maybe this time, we should require a peace treaty ending the Korean War as a condition for nuclear disarmament. We can always block a peace treaty by demanding a total withdrawal of US forces.

In conclusion, Dear Leader, I respectfully request that you approve the draft agreement. We give up very little and leave all our options open. If the Americans misbehave again, we can restart the nuclear program and even test again.

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