

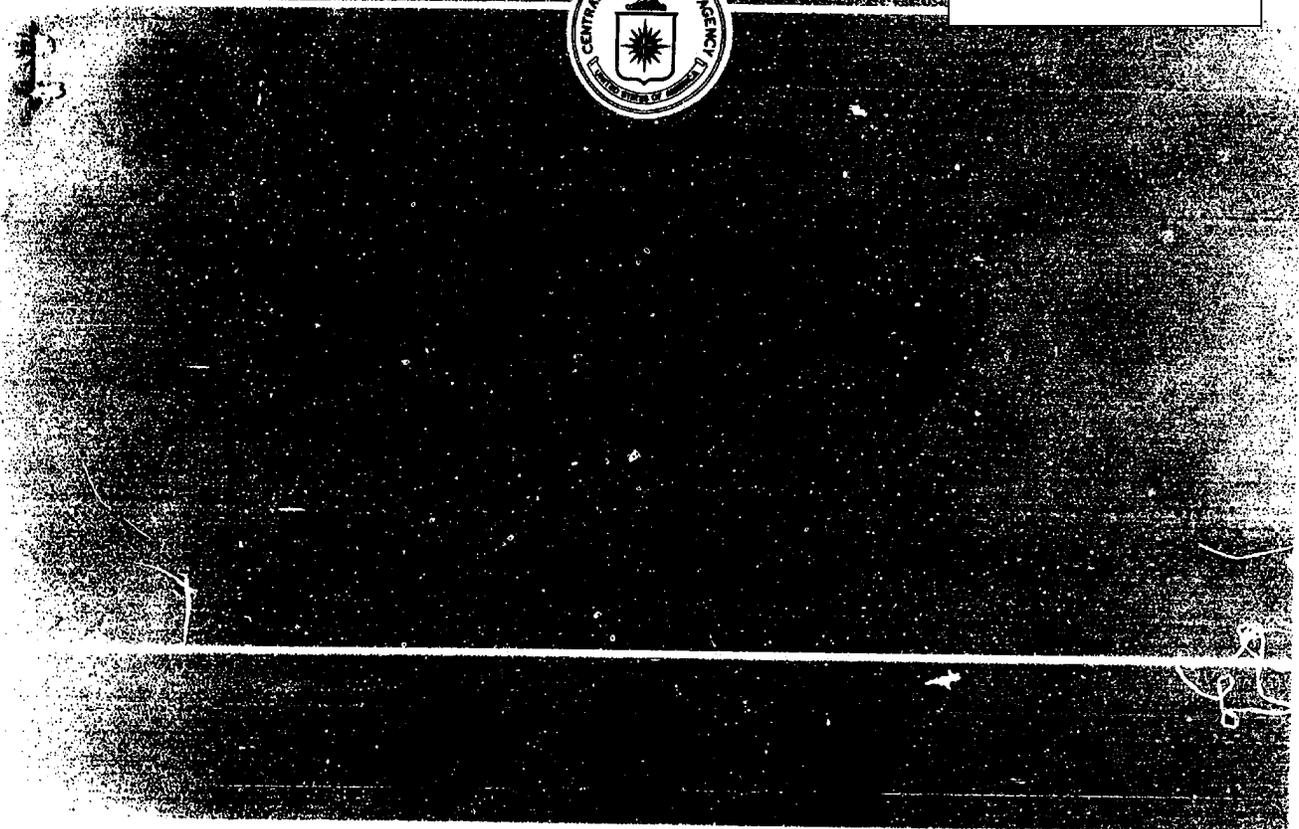
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~~Top Secret~~**NORTH KOREA: Raising the Ante in the Dialogue**

P'yongyang may have both foreign policy and domestic objectives in hardening its stance in its negotiations with Seoul. [redacted]

To protest the current US-South Korean military exercises and the continued planning for next year's Team Spirit maneuvers, North Korea yesterday announced that it will boycott the first sessions of four North-South Joint Commissions set for this month. The Foreign Ministry reiterated that Team Spirit and the US pressure on the nuclear issue threaten progress toward a nuclear regime for the two Koreas and warned for the first time that IAEA inspections could also be at risk. IAEA officials this week are conducting a fourth round of ad hoc inspections at the Yongbyon nuclear complex. [redacted]

In addition, the North has rejected the South's proposals for reopening Red Cross discussions on family exchanges and for further talks on a military hotline, which they had agreed to set up by Friday. [redacted]

Comment: P'yongyang may well be toughening its position in part because it sees nothing to be gained in negotiating with a lameduck administration in Seoul. [redacted] recently said that the North was deliberately slowing the pace because it prefers to deal with the government that will be elected next month. P'yongyang may also hope that increasing the pressure on Seoul will persuade the South Koreans to back away from their insistence on tough bilateral nuclear inspections, facilitating an eleventh-hour compromise the North could accept and even giving the South justification for canceling Team Spirit. The only meeting the North so far has not refused to attend is that of the Joint Nuclear Control Commission set for next Tuesday, suggesting it may leave the door open for just such a deal. The North's implied threat to suspend IAEA inspections could be part of an attempt to encourage a settlement. [redacted]

P'yongyang's harder line may also be useful at home by reinforcing the sense of external threat the regime customarily uses to exhort its populace to accept economic sacrifices. [redacted]

[redacted] from the leadership's perspective, this approach may be even more important now. [redacted] [redacted]

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