



For Immediate Release
Office of the Press Secretary
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Statement by the Press Secretary

Today, administration officials have briefed select Congressional committees on an issue of great international concern. Until Sept. 6, 2007, the Syrian regime was building a covert nuclear reactor in its eastern desert capable of producing plutonium. We are convinced, based on a variety of information, that North Korea assisted Syria's covert nuclear activities. We have good reason to believe that reactor, which was damaged beyond repair on Sept. 6 of last year, was not intended for peaceful purposes. Carefully hidden from view, the reactor was not configured for such purposes. In defiance of its international obligations, Syria did not inform the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of the construction of the reactor, and, after it was destroyed, the regime moved quickly to bury evidence of its existence. This cover-up only served to reinforce our confidence that this reactor was not intended for peaceful activities.

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We are briefing the IAEA on this intelligence. The Syrian regime must come clean before the world regarding its illicit nuclear activities. The Syrian regime supports terrorism, takes action that destabilizes Lebanon, allows the transit of some foreign fighters into Iraq, and represses its own people. If Syria wants better relations with the international community, it should put an end to these activities.

We have long been seriously concerned about North Korea's nuclear weapons program and its proliferation activities. North Korea's clandestine nuclear cooperation with Syria is a dangerous manifestation of those activities. One way we have chosen to deal with this problem is through the Six Party Framework. Through this process we are working with our partners to achieve the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The United States is also committed to ensuring that North Korea does not further engage in proliferation activities. We will work with our partners to establish in the Six Party Framework a rigorous verification mechanism to ensure that such conduct and other nuclear activities have ceased.

The construction of this reactor was a dangerous and potentially destabilizing development for the region and the world. This is particularly true because it was done covertly and in violation of the very procedures designed to reassure the world of the peaceful intent of nuclear activities. This development also serves as a reminder that often the same regimes that sponsor proliferation also sponsor terrorism and foster instability, and cooperate with one another in doing so. This underscores that the international community is right to be very concerned about the nuclear activities of Iran and the risks those activities pose to the stability of the Middle East. To confront this challenge, the international community must take further steps, beginning with the full implementation of the United Nations Security Council resolutions dealing with Iranian nuclear activities. The United States calls

upon the international community to redouble our common efforts to ending these activities and preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction in this critical region.

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