

## **U.S., N. Korea Move Closer on Site Access**

- [Arms Control Today](#)

Following talks in New York and Washington December 4-11, the United States and North Korea appear to be close to a deal to permit U.S. access to the site of an underground facility being built in Kumchangni. In exchange, Pyongyang reportedly expects additional U.S. food aid and concessions on economic sanctions. The potential nuclear applications of the underground facility have threatened to force U.S. withdrawal from the 1994 Agreed Framework, which froze Pyongyang's plutonium-producing facilities in exchange for two light-water reactors and deliveries of heavy fuel oil during construction.

Though no final deal has been reached, U.S. officials said that Pyongyang has accepted the principle of providing access to the construction site and has dropped its demand for \$300 million in compensation. For its part, the Clinton administration continues to insist, as State Department spokesman James Foley said on December 12, that food aid to North Korea is "not linked to political issues." On background, however, U.S. officials have clearly connected the issues of site access and food aid.

Even with an agreement on access to the Kumchangni site, the Agreed Framework will remain on shaky ground. KEDO, the U.S.-led consortium implementing the nuclear agreement, is still behind in its annual shipment of 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil to North Korea, with 109,000 tons still to be delivered as of the end of the year. Foley said on December 15 that the Clinton administration would use money from KEDO's fiscal year 1999 appropriation to complete the delivery of oil due in 1998.

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