

North Korea sanctions questioned



WASHINGTON (AP) — U.N. economic sanctions against North Korea would raise tensions in northeast Asia to the highest point since the Korean War. But would they work against a defiant, already isolated country?

This question, which has lurked in the background of debate over North Korea's nuclear intentions for more than a year, moved to the forefront Thursday.

A U.N. atomic watchdog agency reported that North Korea had killed the agency's last chance of finding the truth about its nuclear past, and the Clinton administration announced that as a result it will push for U.N. sanctions.

North Korea has now stepped beyond a line drawn by the Clinton administration, which just last week offered to resume high-level talks that could have led to establishing normal diplomatic relations.

Sanctions, if they are adopted, are most likely to be imposed as a series of increasingly tough measures.

But it is far from clear that China, which has veto power in the Security Council and which is an ideological ally of North Korea, would support strong

sanctions. President Clinton, asked Thursday in Rome whether he thought China would go along with sanctions, noted that the Chinese have not ruled it out. Clinton said he knew it was hard for China and Japan particularly to take a step that would move the world closer to a possible war with North Korea, but he said the greater danger was allowing North Korea to have nuclear weapons.

"I just don't think we can walk away from this," Clinton said.

Beyond the question of what kind of sanctions are chosen, and which countries cooperate in enforcement, is a more fundamental issue: Would sanctions, which North Korea has likened to an act of war, do the trick?

North Korea, after all, imports only about 10 percent of what it consumes.

One of North Korea's main sources of money is wealthy Korean families living in Japan. No one knows for sure how much money is funneled from Japan; estimates in Japan range from \$600 million to \$1.6 billion a year, mostly cash.

China supplies oil, clothes and some food, and Iran is a source of oil. Russia, which used to be a major trading partner with North Korea as well as a political ally,

has ended its political support and does relatively little business.

Few dispute that sanctions would hurt an economically weak North Korea, but many who have studied the country also think the risk is great that President Kim Il Sung would respond to the pressure by launching a military strike south.

"That regime is not going down, and will not be humiliated, without lashing out" with its considerable military might, said William Taylor of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. He visited North Korea in April.

Taylor's view illustrates the central problem facing the Clinton administration and the United Nations: Imposing sanctions would raise the risk of a costly military confrontation, but the alternative — diplomacy alone — has clearly failed.

International economic sanctions have rarely, if ever, achieved the desired goal. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 the U.N. imposed an economic blockade but that did not compel President Saddam Hussein to withdraw. Military force was required. The sanctions remain today, but Iraq has managed to recover from much of the Gulf War damage.

Alleged ghost worker for Rostenkowski talks

CHICAGO (AP) — Anthony Ramirez is among the 14 people prosecutors say received money from Rep. Dan Rostenkowski's congressional payroll while doing little or no official work.

Ramirez, 50, says he was working as a garbage man by day and moonlighting as a free-lance photographer active in ward politics when the Chicago Democrat approached him in 1977.

Now a fire department inspector, Ramirez said his jobs included photographing West Point and Air Force Academy appointments, formal dinners, campaigns and theme parties at Rostenkowski's vacation home. Ramirez said he charged \$5 an hour for taking the photos and \$2.50 an hour for developing and printing the pictures.

Ramirez said he believed the work he did was legitimate but didn't try to understand how the finances worked. "As far as I know, I was working for the congressman," he said. "I did congressional work."

Prosecutors say Ramirez received \$20,000 in taxpayer money between 1977 and 1986 for photographing personal and political events, but doing no official congressional work.

Ramirez said he isn't certain how much he was paid by the congressman's office. But he said he was surprised when he received his first \$1,000 check from the U.S. Treasury.

"What did I do to deserve this?" he recalled asking a Rostenkowski aide.

Ramirez said he brought the check to Rostenkowski's office, endorsed it and was then paid cash from a folder marked "Photo" for the amount he was owed, which was less than the \$1,000 face value of the check.

Ramirez said he received two more checks for \$1,000 and followed the same procedure. Later, he said he signed some blank vouchers for payment that he left with Rostenkowski's office.



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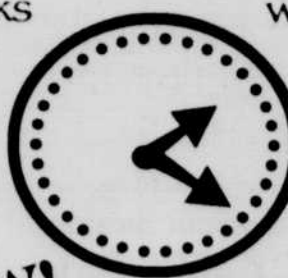
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