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Charles Sheehan

'94 Pyongyang pact architect says U.S. feared a nuclear Tokyo, Seoul

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WASHINGTON (Kyodo) The main architect of a 1994 pact between the United States and North Korea to end Pyongyang's nuclear arms program said Tuesday the U.S. feared a decade ago that Japan and South Korea might seek atomic weapons.

Robert Gallucci also said the U.S. was concerned that such moves by Japan and South Korea to acquire nuclear arsenals would adversely affect negotiations to make the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty permanent and trigger proliferation in other parts of the world.

"The situation of a serious North Korean nuclear weapons program could ultimately lead to the destruction of the norm of the international nonproliferation regime, and we worried about that being the consequence, that being the domino effect," Gallucci, who was a State Department official at the time, told a meeting held by the Nuclear Policy Research Institute.

In the nuclear crisis a decade ago, the administration of President Bill Clinton was considering bombing the Yongbyon nuclear complex as one option.

Clinton "subsequently said that had North Korea reprocessed (spent fuel rods), we would have" gone for the military option, said Gallucci, who is currently a dean at Georgetown University.

The 1994 pact required North Korea to freeze and eventually dismantle its nuclear facilities in Yongbyon in exchange for the construction of two light-water nuclear reactors and a supply of fuel oil until the completion of the first reactor.

Commenting on the current standoff over North Korea's nuclear arms program, Gallucci said he believes Pyongyang is pursuing a uranium enrichment program to make atomic weapons:

The current crisis erupted in October 2002 when U.S. officials said North Korea had admitted having a secret program to enrich uranium for nuclear arms. Pyongyang denied the existence of such a program.

"An enrichment program is a gleam in the eye of the North Koreans, and it may be somewhat more than that," Gallucci said.

He expressed concern that North Korea may sell highly enriched uranium to terrorists.

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