

Relations between the United States and North Korea

Tensions are on the rise between the US and North Korea, after the Communist country admitted it has been actively pursuing a nuclear weapons program. The standoff between Washington and North Korea began in October 2002 when the North Korean government admitted publicly that it had been secretly developing a nuclear weapons program, a move that conflicted with a 1994 agreement to end all nuclear programs. The declaration came after the US said it had evidence North Korea was enriching uranium, a process that creates a more radioactive form of the mineral. According to State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, "the only purpose for doing that is to develop nuclear weapons." In 1994, the Clinton administration convinced North Korea to stop its nuclear weapons program and allow United Nations monitors into the country. In return, the US and other countries pledged to replace North Korea's nuclear power plants that produce plutonium, a key ingredient in nuclear weapons, with light-water reactors, which don't. They also agreed to send North Korea oil to help replace the electricity lost when the nuclear plants shut down. Both sides also agreed to lift trade barriers and pursue diplomatic and economic relations, including economic aid to North Korea. However, North Korea's admission that it had not completely ended its nuclear program angered the US enough to stop the fuel oil shipments. North Korea countered that the US did not fulfill its promises from the 1994 agreement, including the construction of the power plants. US officials say this will not happen until North Korea allows greater nuclear weapons inspections throughout the country.

Words to know:

Tensions _____	plutonium _____
nuclear weapons _____	economic aid _____
standoff _____	admission _____
declaration _____	shipments _____
administration _____	officials _____
monitors _____	inspections _____

Questions

1. True or false: the U.S. currently has a good relationship with North Korea.

2. What has North Korea done that has the United States and the international community worried?

3. What did the Clinton administration persuade North Korea to do in 1994?

4. What is a key ingredient of nuclear weapons?

5. Do you think North Korea should be allowed to make nuclear weapons? Why or why not?

