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Burma, North Korea and WMD: A postscript

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Two Western researchers responsible for the film and associated report by the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) about Myanmar's suspected nuclear weapons program later clarified a key issue. They both emphasised the lack of hard evidence relating to North Korea's direct involvement.

Since the release of the DVB's compelling documentary film on Burma's military ambitions and the written report on nuclear-related activities in that country,¹ the report's co-authors have given a number of interviews to the news media. They have both made statements about North Korea's possible role in Burma's nascent nuclear weapons program:

- Robert Kelley, a former senior IAEA inspector, is quoted on the DVB's website as saying: '[North Korea's] role in the nuclear program is only anecdotal.'²
- Ali Fowle, a DVB researcher, told the *Voice of America*: 'None of our evidence implies that North Korea has anything to do directly with evidence that we think points to a nuclear program.'³

1 Andrew Selth, 'Does Burma Have a WMD Program?', *The Interpreter*, 7 June 2010, archive.lowy.institute.org/the-interpreter/does-burma-have-wmd-program.

2 'Expert Says Burma "Planning Nuclear Bomb"', *Democratic Voice of Burma*, 9 June 2010, www.dvb.no:80/news/expert-says-burma-planning-nuclear-bomb/9527 [page discontinued].

3 Kate Woodsome, 'Expert Accuses Burma of Trying to Build Nuclear Bomb', *Voice of America*, 4 June 2010, www1.voanews.com/english/news/asia/Expert-Accuses-Burma-of-Trying-to-Build-Nuclear-Bomb-95607209.html [page discontinued].

These comments are more specific and go further than anything in the DVB's written report. They are particularly interesting in light of the claims made by a wide range of commentators over the years that North Korea is directly involved in the construction of a secret nuclear reactor in Burma and is actively helping the Naypyidaw regime to develop a nuclear weapon.

They are also relevant to recently stated US concerns about Burma's relationship with North Korea and Naypyidaw's possible violation of UNSC resolutions banning the export of both conventional and WMD-related arms by Pyongyang.⁴

Clearly, despite the DVB's revelations, there is still a wide range of views about Burma's nuclear ambitions, which seem destined to remain the subject of speculation and controversy.

⁴ Andrew Selth, 'Burma, North Korea and US Policy', *The Interpreter*, 18 May 2010, www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2010/05/18/Burma-North-Korea-and-US-policy.aspx [page discontinued] [now at archive.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/burma-north-korea-and-us-policy].

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