

something Cordesman, Grange and Perry said should happen.

"I'm not sure unilateral negotiations are the way to go," Grange said. "You could have a hard-ass official from the U.S. go in, rather than the president, and meet with one of their leaders and talk about the red lines: 'Look, we don't want to have to bomb you, but if you use a nuclear weapon on one of our allies or on us, we'll wipe you off the Earth.' That's in addition to six-party talks."

That probably already has been done covertly, he said.

Perry said he worries North Korea could smuggle plutonium "the size of a grapefruit" out of the country, even if the U.S. were to attempt a containment policy, such as naval blockades.

"They now have enough [plutonium] for eight or nine bombs," he said. "They've probably made most of those bombs already."

North Korea has been making one or two bombs annually for the past several years, Perry said, and it is working on a bigger reactor that could produce 10 bombs a year.

The military option is out, he said; officials used to know where the plutonium was stored in Pyongyang, but the plutonium has since been moved, possibly to several areas, and therefore no longer is a defined target.

Grange agreed, calling North Korea a "subterranean army" with so many underground tunnels that "putting out all the fires" could be close to impossible.

Waiting for regime change is also not an option, Perry said. "The hopes of getting regime change are faint. While we're waiting for that to happen, they're building bombs."

Cordesman said it's not likely there will be more direct U.S.-North Korea negotiations, but it's important not to ignore allies China, South Korea and Japan as the Bush administration works to stop the growth of North Korea's nuclear capabilities.

Grange offered up "soft" options, such as handing out radios to North Koreans, developing something like Radio Free Europe and sending in cartoons, as was done in Iraq to change perceptions of Americans.

People in North Korea live in a closed society, he said, with no access to Internet blogs or radio stations — it's illegal to set a radio dial to anything but the government station — and therefore they do exactly what Kim tells them to do.

The United Nations should work to cut off the government's communications networks, he said. Softer sanctions of food and fuel hurt only the North Korean people, he added. Having a military force also serves as a deterrent, Grange said.

"But a counterattack force would be more Air Force and Navy," he said. "If something hap-

pened in Korea, the response would mostly be from the air."

A drawdown of American troops to one brigade shouldn't affect capabilities, Grange said, because, "to do any kind of good engagement, the Army would have to go there anyway."

Cordesman said that although North Korea has slowly increased the size of its military, the quality

has gone down.

"It's a massive garrison army," he said. "They have an increasingly large surface-air missile system, but it's obsolete at best, even if fully upgraded. This certainly is a force to be reckoned with, but it relies so heavily on mass to the exclusion of quality."

South Korea has a total force of 727,000 service members, while

North Korea maintains 1,082,000 active troops. Despite the size difference, Cordesman said South Korea's army is more effective and it has a better air force and navy.

U.S. precision-strike capabilities could make up for troops spread thin because of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Cordesman said. The U.S. must think in terms of effective options without using

nuclear weapons, he added.

Grange said if the situation in North Korea does lead to a counterattack, he'll be thinking about the U.S. troops sent in to do battle.

"If there is a war with North Korea, I would rather fight in the Middle East any day," Grange said. "They are hardened soldiers. They are very tough." □



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