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Washington Times

June 26, 2004

Pg. 1

Pyongyang Takes A Hard Line At Six-Way Talks

By Bill Gertz and Nicholas Kralev, The Washington Times

North Korea's threat to test nuclear weapons unless the United States make concessions at the six-party talks is being viewed with worry by the Bush administration.

The threat, another sign of Pyongyang brinksmanship, came during the latest round of talks in Beijing between chief North Korean negotiator Kim Gye Kwan and James Kelly, the assistant secretary of state for East Asia, according to U.S. officials.

The North Korean official told Mr. Kelly that North Korean Foreign Ministry officials are under growing pressure from hard-liners within the military to win support for Pyongyang's proposals, or they will conduct a nuclear test, said officials who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The statement on the nuclear test also was viewed with alarm by officials in Japan and South Korea, the U.S. officials said.

And in a step back from earlier talks, the North Koreans at this week's session again denied having a covert uranium enrichment program — the main disclosure made by North Korea in October 2002 that triggered the current nuclear crisis.

At the last round of talks in May, North Korean negotiator Ri Gun asked whether the United States would be willing to resume work on two electrical power-generating nuclear reactors if North Korea agrees to resolve its uranium enrichment program.

At the State Department, spokesman Adam Ereli sought to play down the North Korean remarks, insisting that Pyongyang was not making a threat.

"It was phrased as a statement that some in Pyongyang wanted to test a nuclear weapon," Mr. Ereli told reporters. "It was not phrased or given as an ultimatum."

But other U.S. officials said the comments had to be viewed as a sign that the six-party talks are not making progress toward winning an agreement from North Korea to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs. The talks are scheduled to end today.

All sides agreed to convene the next full round of talks by the end of September in Beijing.

North Korea presented its proposal at this week's talks, which has been characterized in public as "compensation for freeze" of all nuclear arms work.

The U.S. position at the talks was presented by Mr. Kelly in his opening statement. He repeated the tough U.S. posture of demanding a complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantling, or CVID, of the nuclear arms program before any concessions are made.

However, U.S. support among the six parties — the United States, China, Russia, North Korea, South Korea and Japan — is weakening with successive sessions, the officials said.

Russia is now openly backing North Korean positions at the talks, and the Chinese government also is supporting its fellow communist state, the officials said.

South Korea is said to be somewhat neutral or leaning in favor of Pyongyang, while only Japan remains firmly on the side of the U.S. position, the officials said.

Russia's government said earlier this week that it is willing to provide security guarantees to North Korea as a way to break the diplomatic impasse.

White House National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice has said in the past that the United States would continue to pursue a diplomatic solution to the North Korean nuclear problem as long as the talks in Beijing were making progress.

A State Department official in Beijing described the talks Thursday as a combination of "some good, some bad, some a little ugly," the latter an apparent reference to the nuclear-testing discussion.

"We made clear that we would certainly not welcome any such thing and we believe that any such thing would be a very unwise choice," this official said.

A nuclear test by North Korea would formally make the reclusive communist state a declared nuclear power and likely set off a nuclear arms race in the region.

Mr. Ereli said the North Korean comment was "not something new."

"We've heard these sort of comments before," he said.

The exchange on North Korea's threat to test a nuclear weapon came in a two-hour meeting Thursday that Mr. Ereli described as constructive.

The final round of talks was held yesterday, and a joint statement was to be issued.

A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman told reporters that a consensus was reached at the talks that a nuclear freeze by North Korea would be a first step in resolving the issue.

Mr. Ereli said the North Koreans took note of a plan presented by Mr. Kelly earlier this week that would give economic assistance and security guarantees to the country if it commits to dismantle its nuclear weapons programs.

"They characterized our proposal as positive," Mr. Ereli said. "I think we came away from this discussion... with the firm view that the North Koreans are going to give our proposal very serious consideration."

Mr. Ereli noted that North Korea is continuing work on its nuclear program and also poses a danger of providing weapons to dangerous states and regions.

"We remain concerned by the full scope of North Korea's nuclear program, not only its activity in North Korea but also its proliferation activity."

This article is based in part on wire service reports.

<http://www.washtimes.com/national/20040626-121147-8343r.htm>

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Washington Post

June 26, 2004

Pg. 19

N. Korea Says It Can 'Show Flexibility'

Possible Dismantling of Nuclear Arms Programs Tied to Broader Aid Package

By Philip P. Pan, Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, June 25 -- The North Korean government on Friday expressed willingness to compromise with the United States about ending its nuclear weapons programs, saying it would "show flexibility" if U.S. officials improved their offer of energy aid from South Korea and agreed to provide some assistance itself.

In an unusually mild statement read by a North Korean official as six-nation talks in Beijing neared a close, North Korea emphasized it might be willing not only to freeze "all facilities related to nuclear weapons" but also to dismantle them. The North Korean government also refrained from publicly berating the United States as it had during the past two rounds of the talks.

But U.S. officials here said North Korean negotiators continued to deny the existence of a secret uranium enrichment program that the Bush administration and its allies insist must be disclosed and dismantled as part of any deal. One senior U.S. official described the two sides as "far from agreement."

"There's some good, some bad, some a little ugly, but not as much as has been the case in the past. The results would have to be described as mixed so far," said the U.S. official, who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity.

"There are no breakthroughs." During the talks, the Bush administration presented a more specific proposal for resolving the 21-month standoff, offering North Korea the possibility of energy aid from South Korea, security assurances and other benefits during a three-month test period if it promised to disclose and end its nuclear weapons programs.

North Korean delegates on Friday described the proposal as "constructive," the same language they used the day before, and told the U.S. negotiating team that the proposal "was being very carefully studied in Pyongyang," the U.S. official said. Officials expect the talks to end Saturday with a plan to continue discussions at a working-group level.

In exchange for a freeze of its nuclear programs, North Korea wants the United States to remove it from a list of terrorist nations and lift economic sanctions, the North Korean statement said. The North Korean government also asked in the statement that the United States "participate in providing" it with a 2000-megawatt energy capability, about the same amount that would have been generated by two light-water reactors the United States and its allies had promised to build for the Pyongyang government in a deal that fell apart in 2002.

"Compensation is a necessary element of creating trust," the North's statement said, adding that its freeze would begin once the compensation was delivered. But the statement also said that if the United States agreed to take part in providing energy aid, North Korea was "willing to show flexibility" about its demands on the sanctions and the terrorism list. The U.S. proposal envisions South Korea and perhaps other countries providing the North with heavy fuel oil at the start of its freeze, but the United States would not provide energy aid until after North Korea began dismantling its nuclear programs.

The North also said in the statement that its freeze would cover "all facilities related to nuclear weapons," including nuclear materials that have already been reprocessed, and that it would pledge not to build, test or transfer nuclear weapons. "What we are saying is that we will not only freeze these facilities, but if the conditions are met, we'll dismantle these facilities," it said.

North Korean negotiators made a similar declaration during the talks, and they specified that the offer included a key facility in Yongbyon that the North has said produces plutonium for use in bombs, according to the U.S. officials. The U.S. officials described the statements as helpful, but said that North Korea was still not clear in describing what other facilities, programs and materials are covered by its proposal and that it has not provided many details about how it would dismantle its programs as opposed to simply freezing them.

A major problem, they said, is that the North continues to deny operating a secret uranium enrichment program. The current crisis began in October 2002 after the U.S. government confronted North Korea with evidence of the program, which violated a 1994 agreement to freeze its nuclear activities in exchange for oil and other aid. At the time, the Bush administration says, North Korea admitted it had a uranium program.

In its statement, North Korea appeared to suggest that its government had had difficulty reaching a consensus to offer a freeze, saying it "required a large political commitment."

On Thursday, North Korea's chief envoy said in a private session with U.S. negotiators that some people in his country want to test a nuclear weapon and might do so, apparently referring to military hard-liners, U.S. officials said. "It was not phrased as a threat," said the senior U.S. official, but "we made clear that we would certainly not welcome any such thing and that any such thing would be a very unwise choice."

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A6596-2004Jun25.html>

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Los Angeles Times
June 27, 2004
THE WORLD

Nuclear Watchdogs Slam Iran

From Reuters

SHANNON, Ireland — The United States, the European Union and the U.N.'s nuclear watchdog condemned Iran on Saturday for deciding to resume a production process that could make purified uranium for an atomic bomb.

They urged Iran, which says its nuclear ambitions are peaceful, to rethink its decision to produce parts again for centrifuges that can purify uranium.

The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohamed ElBaradei, said he hoped Iran's move was temporary.

But a joint U.S.-EU statement stopped short of threatening new action to punish Iran for breaking a deal it had struck with Britain, France and Germany.

The statement said "the U.S. and EU were disturbed by Iran's recent announcement of its intention to resume manufacturing and assembly of centrifuges."

In the first Iranian reaction to the EU-U.S. statement, a state-appointed newspaper editor hinted that the country might consider pulling out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iran27jun27.1.5224815.story>

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Los Angeles Times
June 28, 2004

IN BRIEF / WASHINGTON, D.C.

Iran to Resume Making Centrifuges

From Times Staff and Wire Reports

Iran said it would resume building centrifuges for its nuclear program, but U.S. national security advisor

Condoleezza Rice expressed hope that diplomacy could resolve the situation.

Iran's decision to resume building centrifuges, used to purify uranium, came after the nuclear agency's condemnation of Tehran last week for failing to cooperate with inspectors.

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-briefs28.3jun28.1.4001378.story?coll=la-headlines-world>

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Washington Times
June 28, 2004
Pg. 13

Nuclear Terrorism Realities

Report urges security, ending production to prevent atomic 9/11

By I-wei J. Chang, The Washington Times

A nuclear catastrophe could occur if terrorists gained access to nuclear weapons or weapons-grade materials, and if regional conflicts or instability degenerated into wars in which nuclear weapons were used, said a report by researchers at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace to a Nonproliferation Conference last week.

Nuclear terrorism on the one hand, and regional proliferation and conflict on the other, are the two most pressing nuclear threats facing the world today, according to "Universal Compliance: A Strategy for Nuclear Security," the preliminary report by George Perkovich, Joseph Cirincione, Rose Gottemoeller, Jon Wolfsthal and Jessica Mathews. The final version is to be released in January to the next U.S. administration.

Unlike countries, which may fear retaliation, terrorist groups could be undeterred about using nuclear weapons to achieve a political agenda, the Carnegie report said.

Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden has expressed interest in acquiring nuclear weapons. While terrorist groups are not believed to have the ability to produce nuclear weapons, they may be able to seize such weapons or materials from other countries.

The report, issued at the conference in Washington, recommends securing nuclear weapons facilities, particularly those in the former Soviet Union, and ending worldwide the production of weapons-usable nuclear materials.

"If the U.S. and others just keep doing what they are doing today, a nuclear 9/11 is more likely than not in the decade ahead," said Graham Allison, director of Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

"Nuclear terrorism is, in fact, preventable," Mr. Allison said. "It is a challenge to international will, determination and stick-to-itiveness, not to our technical capabilities."

Russia and the United States, which have the two largest stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium left over from the Cold War, must take the lead, the report said.

U.S. Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham recently urged a Global Threat Reduction Initiative, to repatriate all Russian and U.S. nuclear fuel from research reactors around the world by 2009.

"This is neither a question of will, nor a question of resources," Mr. Abraham said June 14 at the National Press Club.

However, trends indicate Russia and the United States are re-emphasizing the role of nuclear weapons, said former Sen. Sam Nunn, a Georgia Democrat who served four terms ending in 1997 and a former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Mr. Nunn said U.S.-Russian agreements such as the Moscow Treaty don't seek a complete dismantlement of their nuclear arsenals, sending "a bad message to the rest of the world." He called on the American and Russian presidents to remove their nuclear weapons from hair-trigger alert, which makes possible launching in 15 minutes. If this were accomplished, Mr. Nunn said, "we could immediately eliminate the threat of rapid assured destruction and dramatically reduce the chances of an accidental, mistaken or unauthorized launch."

Today, eight nations have nuclear weapons, according to the report. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) stipulated that only China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — the five countries that detonated nuclear bombs before Jan. 1, 1967, and the only permanent members of the U.N. Security Council — would constitute the nuclear world order.

The United States is the only country to have used atomic weapons — against Japan in 1945 to hasten its World War II surrender.

Israel, India and Pakistan are the three other nuclear-weapons states. North Korea and Iran also seek nuclear weapons and the deterrence such weapons confer.

Several countries have ended nuclear weapons programs since the 1970s, including Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Germany, Japan, Spain, South Africa, South Korea, Taiwan and Yugoslavia. Recent examples are Iraq and Libya. The Carnegie report said many of them have the economic and technical resources to restart a nuclear program, and should be dissuaded.

The Carnegie report said that after nuclear terrorism, the most dangerous challenges are regional nuclear proliferation and conflict in Northeast Asia, the Middle East and South Asia.

Pakistan poses another concern, particularly after its head scientist A.Q. Khan and his associates were discovered to have operated a black market, selling nuclear designs and components to Libya, Iran, North Korea and possibly other countries.

"A nuclear North Korea is not some distant, potential reality, but something that exists here and now," said Kurt Campbell, former deputy assistant secretary of defense.

Agence France-Presse reported in late April that U.S. analysts believed North Korea had at least eight nuclear weapons, rather than two as previously suspected.

North Korea is "in the nuclear-weapons game," Mr. Campbell said. Asian nations continue to ignore this reality because they see greater urgency in the tension-ridden Taiwan Strait, he said. They may change their outlook if North Korea conducts missile tests, as it did in 1998, he added.

The Carnegie draft report made a bold recommendation: Any attempt by North Korea to export nuclear materials or weapons should be considered an "act of war against the United States."

But the United States is unlikely to attack North Korean nuclear facilities because it lacks support from allies Japan and South Korea, said Robert Gallucci, dean of the School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

On the other hand, if the United States believed that North Korea had transferred fissile material to another country or a terrorist group, "it should be considered an act in which we would follow rapidly with the force to end the problem and make sure that it would never happen again." In this case, Washington would not need the concurrence of its allies to protect its security interests, said Mr. Gallucci, a former negotiator of the 1994 Agreed Framework. In the Agreed Framework, brokered during the Clinton administration, North Korea agreed to stop reprocessing plutonium in exchange for two light-water nuclear reactors to generate electricity. In November 2002, North Korean officials admitted they had developed a secret nuclear program in violation of the Agreed Framework, and Pyongyang subsequently withdrew from the NPT. Inspectors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) found strong evidence last month that North Korea transferred almost two tons of uranium to Libya in 2001.

The Bush administration's bottom line is "complete, verifiable and irreversible dismantlement" of North Korea's nuclear program, though Mr. Campbell said the administration is divided on one policy toward Pyongyang. The U.S. should "prepare for the possibility that North Korea is unwilling to abandon its nuclear capabilities," said the Carnegie draft report.

"From North Korea's standpoint, it is no longer bound by the NPT because it withdrew from the treaty last year, so we are back to square one," said Byung-se Yun, a minister at the South Korean Embassy in Washington.

The draft report also recommends strengthening U.S. security alliances with South Korea and Japan to "enhance deterrence and stability on the Korean Peninsula" and reduce incentives for other countries to go nuclear.

The fissure in U.S.-South Korea relations over a common North Korea policy, coupled with China's rise as a military power, may limit U.S. influence in the region, said Scott Snyder, senior associate for international relations at the Asia Foundation.

"The weakening of the U.S.-Korea alliance enhances the likelihood that North Korea indeed may be able to attain nuclear status," he said, "because the absence of our ability to depend on that alliance severely constrains U.S. options to dealing with North Korea."

Iran's possible ambitions to produce nuclear weapons appeared more real last week as Iran announced it would resume enrichment activities, reneging on an October 2003 agreement with the United Kingdom, France and Germany to suspend fuel-cycle activities. Tehran did so after the IAEA board of governors criticized it for withholding information about its nuclear activities. Iran insists its program is for peaceful purposes, such as generating electricity.

In a region where Israel has nuclear weapons and other Middle Eastern states have, or are suspected to have, chemical and biological weapons, a nuclear Iran would add "grave volatility to an already conflicted region," the Carnegie report said. Egypt, Saudi Arabia or other nations might follow Iran's lead and initiate or renew nuclear programs, the report said.

European countries decided not to take Iran's case to the U.N. Security Council after the IAEA rebuke, but John Bolton, undersecretary of state for arms control, told Congress last week that the United States is determined to do so.

So far, Americans have played "the bad cops" and Europeans are "the good cops," said Robert Einhorn, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "What's needed now is for the United States and Europeans to switch roles," he said.

Iran is unlikely to give up its nuclear program after investing many years and achieving progress in its enrichment activities, Mr. Einhorn said. Late last year, Iran said it successfully enriched small quantities of uranium using centrifuge and laser techniques, and separated a small quantity of plutonium, according to a 2004 report by the Congressional Research Service.

"I do know that without much stronger European sticks and much more attractive American carrots, the prospects [of Iran giving up its capability to have nuclear weapons] will be very small," Mr. Einhorn said.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20040628-121252-5928r.htm>

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Washington Times

June 28, 2004

Tehran to resume building centrifuges

By Ali Akbar Dareini

ASSOCIATED PRESS

TEHRAN — Within days, Iran said yesterday, it will resume building centrifuges for its nuclear program in a rejection of international castigation.

But Tehran said it welcomed international supervision of the building program and said it would not use the devices to enrich uranium — for the time being. The process can convert uranium into fuel for peaceful or military nuclear purposes.

The White House called Iran's decision further proof that it was trying to build an atomic bomb. And the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency — the United Nations' nuclear watchdog — said in Moscow that he hoped Iran would reverse its decision, a setback in international attempts to resolve the standoff.

"Iran's continued failure to comply with the IAEA and continued failure to [halt] all enrichment-related reprocessing activities only reinforces the concerns we have expressed," White House spokesman Scott McClellan said in Washington.

"Iran needs to come clean and fully cooperate with its international obligations."

"I hope that this decision is of a temporary nature. I hope it will be reversed," IAEA chief Mohamed ElBaradei said

at a press conference in Moscow, where he was attending a meeting on nuclear power.

"Iran needs to do the maximum to build confidence after a period of confidence deficit. I look at this whole suspension of enrichment as part of this confidence building."

Iran suspended the building of centrifuges and the enrichment of uranium under international pressure, part of the IAEA's attempts to determine the intent of Iran's nuclear program, much of which was kept secret for years.

The United States accuses Iran of trying to build nuclear weapons, and President Bush has labeled Iran part of an "axis of evil" with North Korea and prewar Iraq.

Iran maintains that its atomic program is peaceful and geared toward producing energy.

Tehran's announcement yesterday came after the IAEA approved a European-drafted resolution rebuking Iran for past coverups in its nuclear program.

Iran informed the IAEA and the governments of Britain, Germany and France that it would resume building centrifuges tomorrow, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said.

But Tehran invited the IAEA and the three European countries to supervise the building, assembling and testing of centrifuges when the program resumes, Mr. Asefi said.

"We will do that according to regulations, under IAEA supervision," he said.

Iran suspended uranium enrichment last year under international pressure and in a deal with Britain, Germany and France that extracted a European promise to make it easier for Iran to obtain advanced nuclear technology.

Iran says it will remain committed to that suspension despite European failure to provide the technology.

"Nothing important has happened," Mr. Asefi said. "Europeans failed to respect their commitments. Therefore, there is no reason for us to keep our moral promise."

"We remain committed to voluntary suspension of uranium enrichment. We had cooperation with the IAEA, we have [it] now, and we will cooperate with the IAEA in the future."

Though Mr. Asefi was critical of the Europeans, he said Iran's decision did not mean that Tehran would end dialogue with them. Rather, another discussion between Iranian and European analysts is planned "in the coming days."

Iran has said repeatedly that it wants to control the whole nuclear fuel cycle — from extracting uranium ore to enriching it to a low grade for use as nuclear reactor fuel. Uranium enriched to low levels can be used in power plants, and highly enriched uranium is needed for bombs.

In an appearance on "Fox News Sunday," National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice called Iran's nuclear program a "very tough situation" but "one that still has a diplomatic solution within sight."

"But the Iranians every day demonstrate why the United States has been so hard on them and why the president put Iran into the 'axis of evil' when he talked about Iraq, North Korea and Iran back in his State of the Union address in January 2002," Miss Rice said yesterday.

<http://www.washtimes.com/world/20040628-011810-5168r.htm>

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Washington Post

June 29, 2004

Pg. 15

U.S. Resumes Ties With Libya

Relations Renewed After 24 Years

By Peter Slevin, Washington Post Staff Writer

The Bush administration formally resumed diplomatic relations with Libya yesterday, demonstrating continued faith in Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi and his assertions that he has renounced terrorism and a quest for weapons of mass destruction.

With a letter from President Bush and the ceremonial opening of a U.S. Liaison Office in Tripoli, the administration took the firmest step yet in officially restoring a relationship that was severed 24 years ago because of Libya's support of terrorism.

The practical effects of yesterday's move will be negligible, since the liaison office has been operating for about two months, said a State Department spokesman, who likened the event to a ribbon-cutting. But it solidifies the U.S. administration's political rehabilitation of Gaddafi.

U.S. authorities are undeterred by allegations by an imprisoned U.S. Muslim activist that Gaddafi plotted last year to assassinate Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Abdullah, even as Gaddafi was negotiating a return to the good graces of the U.S. and British governments.

Abdurahman Alamoudi, a prominent figure in Northern Virginia's Muslim community now held in an Alexandria jail, has said he met with Gaddafi twice in 2003. His account was corroborated by Col. Mohamed Ismael, a Libyan intelligence official in Saudi custody, but investigators remain unconvinced.

"We are looking into these reports. We are trying to establish their veracity or not. That veracity has not yet been fully established," State Department spokesman J. Adam Ereli told reporters. He said reports of the plot are "a matter of concern."

The Libyan government rejected the allegations late last year and told U.S. authorities that Libya would not use violence to settle political differences or destabilize another country.

William J. Burns, the State Department's top Middle East official, and J. Cofer Black, the department's senior terrorism expert, raised the case with Gaddafi yesterday, according to a U.S. statement. Nothing emerged to derail the opening of the diplomatic office.

"If we'd gotten any information that would contradict what the Libyans had previously said, we would've included it in the statement," a State Department spokesman said.

Gaddafi, targeted by U.S. bombs during the Reagan administration, has long been eager for a lifting of sanctions and a resumption of investment by U.S. corporations in the oil-rich North African country. Surrendering his programs for developing unconventional weapons cleared the way for sanctions to be partially lifted earlier this year.

The Bush administration has told Gaddafi that ending sanctions and resuming full diplomatic and economic ties depend on a good performance on terrorism. Yesterday's meetings, according to the U.S. statement in Tripoli, included "detailed discussions" on Libya's "pledge to cease all support for terrorism."

Among the topics was the U.S. interest in opening a land route through Libya to neighboring Sudan to ease the humanitarian crisis in Darfur. Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan are to visit Sudan this week.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A12493-2004Jun28.html>

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