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Burma Reiterates its “No-Nuclear-Weapons” Commitment

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After igniting international concern regarding its possible [nuclear weapons intentions](#) over the past several years, Burma (Myanmar) on May 19, ahead of a planned meeting with President Obama, [reaffirmed](#) the country’s non-proliferation commitments. Speaking from Washington, D.C., Burma’s President Thein Sein claimed that the nation would never seek nuclear weapons and stated that Burma lacks the capacity, money, and technology to develop such weapons. Burma in mid-2011 [announced](#) it had ended its nuclear research program due to intense international concern.

Addressing concerns that Burma was at one time cooperating secretly with North Korea on nuclear weapons research or making illicit procurements, President Sein stated that no country has been willing to assist Burma in the development of a weapon, claiming, “...Nobody will come and help us [make] this thing.” He assured that Burma has no military relationship with North Korea but acknowledged that the country has had to establish and maintain diplomatic relations with North Korea given that it is the only country willing to help Burma develop defensive military capabilities.

While it is positive that Burma continues to reiterate its non-proliferation commitments, President Sein has not yet acted on a previous commitment to sign the IAEA Additional Protocol, as highlighted in a previous [ISIS report](#). The Additional Protocol would allow the Agency to more effectively ensure the absence of undeclared nuclear activities in the country. Burma should also provide more detail to the IAEA about its past nuclear research activities and answer any questions the IAEA has, including those pertaining to the nature of its [procurements of sensitive equipment possibly used or intended for use](#) in nuclear purposes. It should also consider allowing the United Nations Panel of Experts on North Korea to visit the country and answer questions about past cooperation with North Korea.

The international community should continue to support Burma’s moves toward greater transparency but push for more in order to verify the end of its suspicious nuclear research efforts.