

Opening Statement by Chairman Lugar

Hearing on North Korea

Today the Foreign Relations Committee again turns its attention towards North Korea. On February 4, the Committee held a hearing to review issues surrounding weapons of mass destruction on the Korean Peninsula. That same week we welcomed Secretary of State Powell, who addressed many questions related to North Korea. Last week, the Committee considered the issue of global hunger with specific reference to North Korea. Our primary goal at this hearing is to explore the possible structure and objectives of diplomatic engagement between the United States and North Korea.

The events of the last several weeks have confirmed and reconfirmed how volatile and unpredictable the situation on the Korean Peninsula has become. The North Korean regime has taken highly provocative actions towards the United States and its neighbors. All of us remain concerned about the potential for miscalculation that could lead to a deadly incident or broader conflict.

North Korea is a foreign policy problem that requires immediate attention by the United States, thoughtful analysis about our options, and vigorous diplomacy to secure the cooperation and participation of nations in the region. Compared to most nations, our information on North Korean decision-making is scant. The actions of the North Korean regime and the military often stray from a course that we perceive as consistent with rational self-preservation. But we must not be deterred in our pursuit of valid analysis. We must avoid simplistic explanations of North Korean behavior. Today, to the degree possible in a public hearing, we will undertake the timely challenge of thinking through our diplomatic options.

In 1994, the United States and North Korea signed the "Agreed Framework" -- the agreement under which North Korea was to shut down its nuclear facilities in return for shipments of heavy oil and the construction of two light water nuclear reactors. Since 1994, North Korea has engaged in activities that clearly violate the terms of the Agreed Framework. Specifically, the pact stipulates that North Korea should freeze its graphite-moderated reactors and related facilities. This suspension of activity was to be monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency. North Korea also was required to store the 8,000 fuel rods removed from its five megawatt reactor "in a safe manner that does not involve reprocessing in North Korea." Based on intelligence information and the acknowledgments of the North Korean regime, however, we know that Pyongyang is taking active steps to implement a nuclear weapons program.

The Clinton Administration had hoped to secure a freeze of North Korea's nuclear program and to prevent it from producing nuclear weapons grade plutonium. It also intended that the Agreed Framework would be the basis for ongoing contacts with Pyongyang. But these goals have not been realized, and circumstances require the United States to develop a new approach.

The Bush Administration has been reluctant to agree to a bilateral dialogue with North Korea until the North Korean regime satisfies U.S. concerns over its nuclear program. The Administration has instead focused on proposals for multilateral talks involving North Korea and other countries. Multilateral diplomacy is a key element to any long-term reduction of tensions on the Korean Peninsula. But it is vital that the United States not dismiss bilateral diplomatic opportunities that could be useful in reversing North Korea's nuclear weapons program and

promoting stability. We must be creative and persistent in addressing an extraordinarily grave threat to national security.

While some American analysts oppose any dialogue with North Korea, especially in the wake of extraordinarily provocative events, I do not believe we have the luxury to be this absolute. The risks are too immediate and the stakes are too high. The United States must maintain military preparedness and should not tolerate North Korea's nuclear weapons programs. But the mere initiation of a bilateral dialogue, with American authorities concurrently consulting with the South Korean government, does not compromise our national security interests.

In that regard, today's hearing is based on the presumption that some engagement must eventually occur between the United States and North Korea. Our witnesses have been asked to provide their perspective on the Agreed Framework and on how multilateral and bilateral diplomacy between the two countries could be structured. They each bring substantial expertise to the Committee, and I am grateful that they have joined us today.

I once again welcome Ash Carter, Co-Director of the Preventive Defense Project at Harvard University. In addition, I am pleased to introduce Arnold Kanter, a Principal and founding member of the Scowcroft Group, and Robert Einhorn, Senior Adviser of the International Security Program at CSIS.

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