

Senate Committee On Foreign Relations
Chairman Senator Richard G. Lugar
Opening Statement for Hearing On
North Korea and the Six Way Talks
July 15, 2004

Today the Senate Foreign Relations Committee once again turns its attention toward North Korea. I am pleased to welcome Assistant Secretary of State James Kelly, who will provide an update on the latest round of Six Party Talks, as he did earlier this year during our March 2 hearing on North Korea. Secretary Kelly is accompanied today by Mr. Joseph DeTrani, Special Envoy for Negotiations with North Korea and U.S. Representative to the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO).

The world acknowledges the importance of the Six Party Talks in providing regional stability and preventing another war on the Korean Peninsula. The North Korean regime's drive to build nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction poses a grave threat to American national security. We are concerned about the transfer of North Korean weapons, materials, and technology to other countries or terrorist groups. In addition, we must remain vigilant to avoid a miscalculation that could unintentionally lead to war.

The purpose of today's hearing is to provide Secretary Kelly and Special Envoy DeTrani the opportunity to provide a clear account of events in Beijing. They were the leaders of the U.S. delegation in the Plenary and Working Group sessions. I am pleased by their willingness to visit with the Committee in open session.

As we meet, events are developing rapidly in Northeast Asia. President Bush originally envisioned a strategy incorporating a multilateral approach to addressing North Korea's nuclear programs, with a goal of forging a united front with South Korea, Japan, Russia, and China. However, in an effort to scuttle the Six-Party process, North Korea has accelerated bilateral dialogue with its neighbors on a myriad of issues.

South Korea recently engaged in high level military to military discussions with North Korea and reached agreement on a number of issues. Kim Jong-il has displayed new flexibility with the Japanese on the abduction issue, and it appears Japan and North Korea may normalize relations within a year. The Chinese continue providing massive assistance to North Korea, and the Russian Foreign Minister recently returned to Moscow from a high-level visit to Pyongyang.

While I appreciate the inclination of countries within the region to respond to initiatives from Pyongyang, these initiatives have not diminished the necessity of eliminating North Korea's nuclear programs. I am hopeful that the leadership of Japan, South Korea, Russia, and China will continue to work with the Bush Administration in a multilateral context for a peaceful resolution of this matter.

Both North Korea and the United States presented detailed proposals in Beijing. Secretary Kelly and Special Envoy DeTrani exhibited appropriate flexibility by engaging in occasional bilateral interaction with North Korean officials.

I also extend appreciation to Administration officials for continuing to raise human rights issues with the North Koreans. This Committee is committed to the resolution of ongoing human suffering in North Korea's gulags and prison system.

In addition to Secretary Kelly and Special Envoy DeTrani, the Committee will hear from Dr. Ashton Carter of the JFK School of Government at Harvard. As one who was deeply involved in launching the Pentagon's Counter-proliferation Initiative some ten years ago when he was Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton Administration, he knows that negotiations are only the first step in a successful counter-proliferation process. We have asked Dr. Carter to consider the Administration proposal to the North Koreans and to reflect on the kinds of strategies and programs necessary for freezing, disabling, and dismantling North Korea's nuclear programs. I am particularly interested in his analysis as to whether and how we might apply programs like the Nunn-Lugar Cooperative Threat Reduction program to North Korea. Is such a program feasible, and what would be involved in its implementation? Under what circumstances, if any, might North Korea agree to open itself to unfettered inspections of its nuclear program?

Ambassador Jack Pritchard is with us today, as well. He has extensive background on several fronts related to North Korea, and will specifically address the energy portion of the U.S. proposal. He served as Ambassador and Special Envoy for Negotiations with North Korea and U.S. Representative to KEDO. During his five years on the National Security Council Staff, Ambassador Pritchard was involved in negotiations with North Korea. He accompanied Secretary of State Albright on her visit to Pyongyang in 2000.

We look forward to engaging our distinguished witnesses on the situation in North Korea and U.S. policy options toward the peninsula.

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