



U.S. Policy Toward North Korea

R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs
 Testimony to the House International Relations Committee
 Washington, DC
 November 16, 2006

AS SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS

Thank you Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Lantos, and distinguished Members of the Committee for this timely opportunity to discuss U.S. policy toward North Korea.

Mr. Chairman, let me first wish you the best in your retirement and express my deep appreciation for your leadership of this important committee. As the last World War II combat veteran from the Pacific theater serving in the U.S. House of Representatives, you are taking with you into retirement a valuable and irreplaceable perspective on our relations with East Asia. We all have benefited greatly from your experience and wisdom. On behalf of all of my State Department colleagues, I wish to thank you for your support for American diplomacy and for the American Foreign Service.

Introduction

Mr. Chairman, with its reckless July 5 missile launches and October 9 nuclear test, the unpredictable North Korean government has reminded us again of the danger its Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and nuclear programs pose to U.S. national security, to our allies, and to peace and security in Northeast Asia. The North Korean government has broken its international commitments and threatened its neighbors and the world.

Our response to North Korea's objectionable behavior has been resolute. Together with China, Japan, and Russia, the United Nations Security Council passed Resolution 1718 on October 14, just five days after the nuclear test, imposing harsh sanctions on the North Korean government. At the same time, we continue to seek a diplomatic way forward to gain North Korea's full adherence to the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement, which if implemented will lead to the complete, verifiable, and irreversible dismantlement of that country's nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs.

We do not and will not recognize North Korea as a Nuclear Weapons State. We thus seek as our most important objective the full dismantlement of all North Korea's nuclear weapons programs. We want North Korea to rejoin the NPT and return to IAEA safeguards. We believe the best way to achieve these ends is for the U.S. to continue to adhere to our dual-track strategy by:

1. implementing fully the UN sanctions to penalize and isolate the regime; and
2. keeping the door open to discussions and a return to the Six Party Talks.

We are pursuing these objectives with a clear purpose and considerable energy. Just last week, I traveled to Japan, South Korea, and China with Under Secretary Robert Joseph on the instructions of President Bush. We also met with senior Russian diplomats in Beijing. Our aim was to coordinate a common position on both the sanctions and the diplomacy with the four governments – our close partners in the Six Party Talks. We were met with a very positive reception in each capital, and a recognition of the need to work together to put maximum pressure on the Kim Jong-Il regime.

This week, President Bush and Secretary Rice are in Hanoi for the APEC Summit meetings. There, they will meet with leaders from across Asia to discuss what the world community should do to bring North Korea to full implementation of its commitments to all of us. Their goal will be to reach agreement with our partners on a way forward toward reviving and achieving success at the Six-Party Talks, and to reaffirm with our partners our mutual commitment to fully and effectively implement Resolution 1718.

Mr. Chairman, North Korea's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons, coupled with its pursuit of other WMD programs and ballistic missiles, is a clear threat to international peace and security. The DPRK has also laundered money and distributed counterfeit U.S. currency, and has engaged in illegal trafficking of narcotics, cigarettes, and other goods. Overcoming the threat posed by North Korea is one of our Government's highest foreign policy priorities.

As we pursue our dual-track approach, we are also strengthening our strategic relationships in Northeast Asia and reassuring our allies. While we seek a peaceful solution to the North Korea nuclear problem, we also realize the very real military threat posed by North Korea. Our policies remain anchored by our alliances with key security partners Japan and South Korea. On the day of the nuclear test, President Bush made a public address reaffirming the full range of the United States deterrent and security commitments to Japan and South Korea, including the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty of 1960 and the U.S.-Republic of Korea Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953.

President Bush also warned that the transfer of nuclear weapons or material by North Korea to states or non-state entities would be considered a grave threat to the United States, and we would hold North Korea fully accountable of the consequences of such action. During her October trip to Asia, Secretary Rice reiterated our security commitments while on the ground in Tokyo and Seoul. Our alliance guarantee to Japan means that there is no reason for that nation to build its own nuclear weapons capability – which is a welcome reassurance to China and other Northeast Asian nations and serves to minimize regional tensions. To further support Japan's defense, we are also expanding missile defense cooperation with that government, as we are doing with other partners.

As we continue our efforts to deal with this challenge, we look forward to support and guidance from this Committee and the Congress.

The North Korean Threat

North Korea's July 5 missile launches, including its test of a long-range Taepo-Dong 2, flouted international norms and violated a standing, self-imposed moratorium on ballistic missile tests to which the North committed in 2000. The United States, China and other countries immediately urged the DPRK to refrain from further provocations, and the United Nations Security Council responded on July 15 by unanimously adopting Resolution 1695, which condemned North Korea's actions.

Unfortunately, the North's response to the international community was its October 3 threat to conduct a nuclear test. This threat flagrantly violated the commitments it made over the years not to pursue nuclear weapons, including its signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1985, an inter-Korean agreement on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in 1992, the 1994 Agreed Framework with the United States, and the September 19, 2005 Six Party Joint Statement. The President, Secretary Rice, and our entire diplomatic team worked closely with Security Council members and our key partners in the region to send an unambiguous message to Pyongyang: Do not test. We also warned the North Koreans directly through their UN Mission in New York. However, despite these clear warnings, North Korea on October 9 detonated a nuclear device.

The international community's response was again swift and clear. On October 14, the Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 1718, a Chapter VII resolution with binding obligations on all UN Member States. This unprecedented resolution -- made possible by strong leadership from the U.S., Japan, China, and Russia -- condemned the nuclear test and requires Member States to implement specific sanctions related to the DPRK's nuclear, WMD, and missile programs.

The G8, ASEAN, the EU, and many other international groups, as well as numerous individual nations, have also spoken out to condemn the North Korean nuclear test and ballistic missile launches.

East Asia: A Vital Region with Important U.S. Security Interests

Mr. Chairman, North Korea's self-isolating behavior, which has contributed to the country's poverty, stands in dramatic contrast to the impressive, positive trends in East Asia, one of the most prosperous and successful regions in the world today.

The East Asia-Pacific region accounts for nearly a third of the earth's population, a quarter of global GDP, a disproportionate share of global growth, and a quarter of U.S. exports, including about 37 percent of our agricultural exports. In all, there is some \$810 billion in two-way trade with the United States. In every regard -- geopolitically, militarily, diplomatically, economically, and commercially -- East Asia is vital to the national security interests of the United States.

Today, the East Asia-Pacific area is largely at peace and the future for the region looks brighter than the past. The region has not seen a major military conflict in more than 25 years, and there has been widespread rejection of terrorism. Yet there is a glaring exception to this sea of good news. The Korean Peninsula unfortunately remains divided more than 50 years after the Korean War. There is a truce, an armistice line, but not a peace. North Korea still amasses its forces along the demilitarized zone and does not formally recognize the existence of South Korea. North Korea's bellicose government routinely threatens conflict with our ally, the Republic of Korea, and has troubled relations with all its neighbors.

The US has played a leading role to help stabilize Northeast Asia since the end of World War II and will continue to do so. We are committed to maintaining the 60-year period of relative peace and security, made possible in large measure by the presence of U.S. military forces in the region. We seek to maintain that peace by working with other countries to isolate North Korea. At the same time, our greatest ambition remains achieving the lofty but reachable goals outlined in the September 2005 Joint Statement, including the full denuclearization of and a permanent peace settlement on the Korean peninsula, normalized, peaceful relations between North Korea and its neighbors and between North Korea and the United States, and new opportunities for the people of North Korea to build better lives.

Dual-Track Strategy

Mr. Chairman, as I said at the outset, we have a clear strategy for dealing with North Korea. This is a dual track approach comprised specifically of (1) sanctions aimed at penalizing and isolating the North while pressuring them to pursue diplomacy, and a (2) diplomatic track aimed at a negotiating North Korea's denuclearization. The sanctions also protect the U.S. and our allies from North Korea's nuclear, WMD, and missile threats, including its proliferation of nuclear, WMD, and missile technologies.

Diplomacy

We are pursuing a diplomatic solution through the resumption of the Six-Party Talks. This process was energized with the breakthrough Assistant Secretary Chris Hill achieved in Beijing on October 31, when, in meetings with his Chinese and North Korean counterparts, the North agreed to return to the Six Party Talks, and renewed its commitment to the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement and to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

Let me stress that the world will not accept merely the resumption of the Talks for talks' sake. We need to make real progress in the next round. Everything that North Korea seeks is on the table. Our goal is straightforward and spelled out clearly in the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement: a denuclearized Korean Peninsula, which includes North Korea's complete and verifiable dismantling of its nuclear programs and its return as a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and IAEA safeguards, including the Additional Protocol. Equally important, the Joint Statement envisions a better life for the people of North Korea through economic and energy assistance; greater integration into the prosperous region around it; fuller participation in the international community; a path toward diplomatic recognition; and a road map toward a full peace treaty to end the Korean War.

Regrettably, within 24 hours of its signing of the Joint Statement, the DPRK chose to reinterpret the agreement radically and unilaterally. We welcome the North's renewal of its commitment to the Joint Statement which was made during Assistant Secretary Hill's October 31 meetings in Beijing. But North Korea will need to demonstrate that it is serious this time about fulfilling its commitments. We believe that full implementation of the Joint Statement remains the best path for a better future for North Korea and its people. In Assistant Secretary Hill's October 31 meetings, we also assured the North Koreans that within a resumed Six-Party process, we would be willing to form a working group to discuss and address financial issues, including the Banco Delta Asia case.

Some insist that the U.S. should negotiate with North Korea solely on a bilateral basis, but the North Korean problem -- especially its pursuit of nuclear weapons -- is not just a U.S.-North Korea bilateral issue. Rather, North Korea's nuclear weapons pose a regional threat to all its neighbors. South Korea must be part of the solution, as must Japan, China and Russia. That is why we are addressing this issue in the Six-Party framework, with all the regional stakeholders that have the most leverage on North Korea afforded a place at the table. As host of the Six-Party Talks, China played a central role in the success of last September -- the unanimous adoption of the Six-Party Joint Statement. As a neighbor of North Korea, Japan has important security and bilateral interests at stake, including the abductee issue. Tokyo played the lead role in drafting UN Resolution 1695 in response to the July 5 missile launches, and continues to lead in the multilateral diplomatic track. South Korea has unique considerations and an interest in a comprehensive resolution of the DPRK nuclear issue, and its security is threatened most directly by North Korea's militarism. Finally, Russia, with its historical ties to North Korea and long experience with disarmament, is a critical partner in the Six Party process. Secretary Rice and I have consulted closely with Moscow throughout this crisis.

North Korea seeks to divide the five parties and desires, especially, to negotiate directly with the U.S. It should not be the responsibility of the United States alone to achieve denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. It is rather in our clear interest to have China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia pulling on the same oar with the U.S.

The unprecedented level of cooperation that has emerged among Northeast Asian countries on this issue would not have been possible had we adopted a bilateral approach. That said, the United States has held bilateral discussions with North Korea within the Six Party talks since 2002 and we would have every expectation to continue to do so in the future.

Sanctions

Concurrent with the diplomatic track, we are working to fully and effectively enforce the sanctions against North Korea in UNSC Resolution 1718, and to get our international partners to do the same.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718 is binding on all UN Member States. 1718 condemned the nuclear test and expressed the Council's grave concern that the test posed a danger to peace and stability in the region. The Security Council demanded that North Korea refrain from conducting any additional nuclear or missile tests, retract its announcement of withdrawal from the NPT and return to NPT and IAEA safeguards, and suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile program. It also decided that North Korea must abandon all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner.

UNSCR 1718 required Member States to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer to the DPRK of a specified list of conventional weapons, and items, material, equipment, goods and technology, which could contribute to the DPRK's nuclear, ballistic missile, or other WMD-related programs. UNSCR 1718 additionally banned the transfer of luxury goods to North Korea.

The United States has taken steps to implement Resolution 1718 expeditiously.

Many were already U.S. policy. The United States has a total prohibition on the export to North Korea of any items that could contribute to North Korea's nuclear, missile, biological and chemical programs. This includes all of the items designated by the 1718 Sanctions Committee. In addition, we have previously acted under Executive Order 13382 to designate twelve entities and one individual as being engaged in proliferation activities related to North Korea. Under E.O. 13382, the United States has frozen the funds, assets and economic resources of these entities and individuals. We have also proposed that the 1718 Sanctions Committee designate these entities and individual, under the provisions of the Resolution.

Further, we have defined a list of luxury goods banned for transfer to North Korea. The U.S. currently sends very few, if any, of these goods to the DPRK, but these new regulations will ensure that we are in full compliance with Resolution 1718.

In pressing all UN Member States to fully and effectively implement Resolution 1718, our intent is not just to sanction for sanction's sake. North Korea needs to be punished and isolated for its reckless actions that threaten peace and security. At the same time, we want to convince the North Koreans to pursue the diplomatic path and agree to denuclearize. China, North Korea's largest trading partner and main conduit to the outside world, has committed to enforce 1718. As China follows through, the North Korean regime will feel the pain. It will be deprived of hard currency it earns from exporting WMD and missile technology and conventional arms. And the North Korean elite will lose access to prized luxury goods. We are hopeful this pressure will convince the North to do the right thing. But should the North not take advantage of the opportunity to resume and achieve progress at the Six Party Talks, the sanctions will continue to protect the U.S. and our international partners by limiting the advancement of the North's nuclear, WMD, and missile programs, and by preventing the North from proliferating nuclear, WMD, and missile technologies to other regimes and to non-state actors.

In addition to pressing for full and effective implementation of Resolutions 1718, we are making great efforts to strengthen the global non-proliferation regime. First, through initiatives such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, or PSI, countries work together to stop illicit shipments of WMD, their delivery systems, and related materials on the ground, in the air, and at sea, to and from states and non-state actors of proliferation concern. Eighty states already participate in PSI, and we are urging all Member States to endorse the Statement of Interdiction Principles and participate in PSI activities. Second, we are bringing India into the non-proliferation regime, with a pioneering agreement that gives the IAEA access to India's civil nuclear facilities and gives India access to civilian nuclear power. We are grateful for the support this Committee and the entire House of Representatives gave to this effort. Third, we are rallying the world behind a UN Security Council Resolution that requires all countries to criminalize proliferation activities. Along with Russia, we have launched the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Our Allies in Asia

What we found in the region last week was a unanimous recognition that North Korea's nuclear test is a "game changer," that this is not a time for business as usual. This is why the Japanese have imposed their own unilateral sanctions, including barring North Korean imports. This is why the South Koreans have promised to become more actively involved in PSI and have suspended aid to the North and frozen expansion of their joint North-South economic projects. This is why the Chinese took the unprecedented step of supporting Security Council resolutions 1695 and 1718. All our partners are committed to implementing Resolution 1718 and to the effort to reach a diplomatic agreement with the North on denuclearization.

Iran

How the world responds to North Korea is likely to affect the calculations of other aspiring nuclear powers, including Iran. Through our firm multilateral diplomacy confronting the North Korean threat, we are also sending a strong message to Iran: The path North Korea is choosing is not leading to more prosperity and security – it is, in fact, leading in the opposite direction. Iran should heed this message, and meet the requirements of UN Security Council Resolution 1696 by fully and verifiably suspending its enrichment and reprocessing activities. If Iran chooses this correct path, rather than facing punitive measures like North Korea, Iran could get a wide range of economic, political, and technological benefits, as promised in the P5+1 incentive package, and the U.S. will engage in direct talks with Iran.

The permanent members of the Security Council have a special responsibility to stop these two countries – North Korea and Iran – from advancing their nuclear weapons programs. If we can succeed, the world will be a measurably safer place. If we cannot, we will face a critical challenge to our basic security. This must be one of our nation's top foreign policy objectives – to stop Iran and North Korea.

North Korean Human Rights

Our concerns about the behavior of the DPRK extend well beyond denuclearization. The regime subjects its citizens to rigid controls over many aspects of their lives and maintains an extensive prison camp system, with reports of prisoners' involuntary labor, torture, forced abortions, starvation, and execution. Citizens are denied basic human rights such as freedom of expression, religion, movement, assembly, and association. The government attempts to control all information; there is no freedom of the press. Since 2001, the U.S. has designated North Korea as a country of particular concern for violations of religious freedom. The U.S. has made clear to North Korea that discussion of its human rights record will be part of any future normalization process.

The DPRK's behavior towards its citizens, including its human rights failings, have led to a stream of refugees. The United States is extremely concerned about the plight of North Korean refugees. As you are aware, President Bush was the first world leader to invite some of these refugees into the Oval Office. We are deeply troubled by reports of the involuntary return of North Koreans from China to the DPRK, as these returnees may face serious abuses, including torture and execution in some cases. The U.S. regularly discusses its strong concerns with China and other governments, as well as with the highest levels of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and concerned non-governmental and private groups. The U.S. values the role of organizations dedicated to promoting the human rights of North Koreans. The U.S. also has great sympathy for the Japanese families of those innocent people abducted by the North Korean regime.

The Administration appreciates Congress' support for our efforts in this area, and is successfully implementing the 2004 North Korean Human Rights Act. We will continue to closely consult with Congress on this important issue.

Humanitarian Assistance

We are watching carefully as we implement UNSCR 1695 and 1718 that the humanitarian situation does not worsen for the North Korea people. The President has made clear that passage of UNSCR 1718 is not intended to make humanitarian work more difficult to conduct.

The United States continues to support the efforts of the World Food Program to provide assistance to the DPRK's most vulnerable populations. Since 1995, when the magnitude of the crisis in North Korea was first identified, the United States has generously supported WFP's activities in that country, providing over 2 million tons of food assistance, valued at over \$700 million.

We will base any decision on whether to contribute food to WFP's new Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation for North Korea, as always, on assessed needs, competing needs elsewhere, and the ability to monitor the distribution of that assistance, to assure that our food gets to its intended recipients. Our objective in providing food aid to North Korea has been and will continue to be to help relieve the suffering of the North Korean people, despite our concerns about the North Korean government's policies.

Conclusion

Mr. Chairman, in my consultations with Japanese, South Korean, Chinese, and Russian officials last week, it was clear that our Six-Party partners share our grave concerns about the North Korea nuclear problem and our commitment to a dual-track approach. They agree on the need to send a strong international message to Pyongyang that there are consequences to its irresponsible actions, and that measures such as UNSCR 1718 will remain in force until North Korea meets all of the requirements of this important resolution. In Hanoi this week, President Bush and Secretary Rice will reaffirm our policy and firm resolve with the leaders of APEC nations.

Working closely with the international community and our Six-Party partners, the United States will continue to press on all diplomatic fronts and will use all policy tools and legal authorities at its disposal, consistent with international law and the mandates of the Security Council, to achieve the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Our message to Pyongyang remains clear: abandon nuclear weapons, move to implement the Joint Statement, and join your neighbors as a responsible member of the international community and the prosperous region of Northeast Asia.

Thank you very much.

Released on November 16, 2006



Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.