

Opening Statement of Senator Richard G. Lugar

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Breaking the Cycle of North Korean Provocations Hearing

March 1, 2011

Mr. Chairman, we are grateful for the safe return from New Zealand of Assistant Secretary Campbell, Senator and Mrs. Bayh, and others who were in that country at the time of the recent earthquake. Our thoughts and prayers go out to the injured and the families and friends of those who died in this tragic event.

Today's hearing will consider ways of dealing with North Korean provocations that have heightened tensions in Northeast Asia. The sinking of a South Korean ship in March 2010, the shelling of South Koreans last November, and the possibility of another nuclear test illustrate the cycle of North Korean provocations.

In the broader context, today's hearing also provides an opportunity to examine the Obama Administration's plan for addressing North Korea's weapons of mass destruction. In testimony before the Foreign Relations Committee in 2009, Ambassador Bosworth stated, "If North Korea does not heed the unanimous call of the international community and return to negotiations to achieve the irreversible dismantlement of their nuclear and ballistic missile capacity, the United States and our allies in the region will need to take the necessary steps to assure our security in the face of this growing threat." While the Administration has worked closely with South Korea in response to various North Korean provocations during the last two years, it is less clear that the Administration has developed a strategy with the potential to dismantle North Korea's nuclear weapons program. It is also unclear whether addressing the security threat from North Korea is sufficiently prioritized in our relationship with China. I look forward to the insights of our panels on these questions.

Beyond the disposition of North Korea's nuclear weapons program, the United States and our allies must be devoting great effort to preventing proliferation from North Korea. The North Koreans utilize a network of trading companies to secure components for the North Korean military complex. This web includes as many as 250 trading companies extending to dozens of countries. These same companies reportedly have been used to transfer North Korean nuclear technology to other countries. The risk that sensitive nuclear technology, weapons components, or even weapons themselves might be transferred out of North Korea for geopolitical objectives or personal profit is an equal, if not greater, threat than North Korea's missile capability. Instability within the North Korean leadership associated with a transfer of power heightens these concerns, both because of what the regime might do in a time of upheaval, and because individuals facing a purge that could result in loss of personal income may be willing to take greater risks for profit.

The United States and the global community pursue an array of options hoping to bring about change within North Korea and convince the North Korean government to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction. Among those measures are economic sanctions. Last year I requested that the Congressional Research Service assess the status and effectiveness of economic sanctions targeting North Korea, specifically in reference to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1874. CRS analysts determined that “implementation has been uneven globally and in cases has diminished over time. An important challenge has been encouraging nations with substantial trade links to North Korea – particularly China, but also a range of nations that serve as transshipment points for North Korean goods, or that have financial institutions that deal with North Korean entities—to implement U.N. sanctions.” I invite any of our witnesses to comment on the sanctions situation and provide insight on ways of enhancing sanctions implementation. Mr. Chairman, I will submit the CRS report in its entirety for inclusion in the record of today’s hearing.

I am pleased that Ambassador Robert King, the U.S. Envoy for North Korea Human Rights issues, is in the audience today. I would ask Assistant Secretary Campbell or Ambassador Bosworth to elaborate on Ambassador King’s work and how it conforms to the organizational matrix of the Administration’s North Korea team.

Another point of ongoing interest for me is the POW/MIA issue related to the Korean War. More than 8,000 Americans are listed as missing. Until May of 2005, the U.S. and North Korea cooperated on a recovery program of the remains of U.S. servicemen. More recently, the U.S. and China signed a memorandum of understanding so that the United States could receive information on Americans held in China during the Korean War. I am hopeful that the Obama administration will forcefully raise the issue of POWs and MIAs in future communications with North Korea.

The witnesses on our second panel possess remarkable experience and understanding with regard to North Korea. Few Americans have spent as much time on the ground in North Korea as Mr. Carlin. Dr. Noland continues to provide helpful analysis on trends in North Korea’s economy and food supply. Mr. Flake has unique perspective on the regional dynamics and implications of events within North Korea. I look forward to their collective assessment of the present situation and recommendations on how to move forward.

I thank the Chairman.

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