Mr. Speaker, there

was a range of interesting reactions to

the Bush administration’s statements

last week that they were willing to resume

talks with the government of

North Korea, the DPRK, some suggesting

this was a reversal of policy,

perhaps a return to the North Korean

foreign policy of the Clinton administration.

Rather, the last 4- to 5-month

period should be recognized as an appropriate

pause in our intensive contacts

with North Korea to reexamine

the goals, tactics, achievements, and

failures of American policy toward

North Korea.

During the last few years, there have

been substantial and growing congressional

concerns, especially among Republicans,

over the Clinton administration’s

North Korea policy. North Korea

is arguably the most dangerous and erratic

nation in Asia, perhaps the world,

with a ruling clique that is intent on

surviving even at any cost to its people.

Indeed, their policies have killed

huge numbers of their people through

starvation. I believe it remains the

place where there is the greatest

chance of U.S. troops becoming militarily

engaged in a terrible conflict.

The DPRK continues to forward-deploy

a 1.2 million-man army.

While finally agreeing to an indefinitely

defined moratorium on missile

flight tests, North Korea continues to

develop and produce ballistic missiles,

some of which are now capable of

reaching the United States. In addition,

there are certain indications that

the DPRK may be maintaining a covert

nuclear program.

Economically and socially, the ‘‘Hermit

Kingdom’’ has come to the crossroads

and must decide whether it continues

on its path towards oblivion or

whether it wants to dramatically reform

its conduct and join the community

of responsible nations. Logically,

the United States should be in a position

to significantly influence the

DPRK’s behavior. Instead, however, we

find ourselves in a position where over

the last few years North Korea has consistently

been rewarded for outrageous

behavior or for threatening such conduct.

North Korean behavior resembles

that of the 18th century Barbary pirates,

demanding ever-increasing levels

of tribute from America, and some of

its neighbors, in return for marginally

tolerable behavior.

Overall, the preceding administration

seemed too willing to tolerate

North Korean misbehavior and demands

for tribute. The United States

has provided heavy fuel oil and humanitarian

food aid in increasing quantities.

Quietly, escaping the notice of

the American people, North Korea became

the largest recipient of foreign

aid in Asia, although humanitarian aid

was given through indirect means. Despite

that level of assistance, we are

prevented now from adequately monitoring

the distribution of that assistance,

even though there is a very high

probability of aid diversions to the

North Korean military.

Mr. Speaker, as the Bush administration

stands poised and ready to reengage

North Korea in discussions, if

there is any sign such talks would be

productive, it needs to be mindful of

the need to let the North Koreans know

in no uncertain terms that the cycle of

extortion for their good behavior is

over. Pay tribute or extortion is an

outrageous violation of the American

heritage, and we will not continue it.

We will not pay, directly or indirectly,

for what the North Koreans should do

to improve their own plight: live on the

Korean Peninsula peacefully with their

neighbors to the south; end its tactics

of terrorism, weapons proliferation,

and blackmail; sign a peace treaty to

finally end the Korean War; and give

evidence that it wants to build a positive

relationship with the United

States and the international community.

Finally, Bush administration contacts

with North Korea should be much

more careful than the Clinton administration

to closely involve the South

Koreans, the Republic of Korea, in

those talks directly or as closely as

possible. We must not succumb to the

old North Korean strategy to drive a

wedge between the United States and

South Korea or to denigrate the legitimacy

of the government of South

Korea.

Mr. Speaker, that is my advice, gratuitous

though it is, to the Bush administration.

We need to change our

policy.