Ambassador Burns, we are very pleased to have

you here today. You are highly regarded as one of our most distinguished

diplomats, and we look forward to hearing your observations

on your recent trip to East Asia. We hope you can provide the

Congress with definitive information on how the Administration, in

consultation with our allies, plans to address the North Korean nuclear

crisis.

Let me also take the opportunity to offer congratulations to the

former South Korean foreign minister, Ban Ki-moon, and to the

Korean people on the occasion of his election as the UN’s new Secretary-

General. This event is a source of pride for Koreans worldwide

as they reflect on how their nation rose from the ashes of war

to become a major diplomatic player on the world stage. It is also

particularly fitting to have as the UN’s new leader a representative

of a nation which owes its very existence as a free and sovereign

state to the stalwart actions of the United Nations in 1950.

I understand, Ambassador Burns, that you and your South Korean

and Japanese counterparts stated in Seoul last week that

‘‘North Korea will not be recognized as a nuclear weapons state.’’

But, in reality, isn’t the nuclear genie already out of the bottle?

Aren’t we really talking about how to get that genie back inside the

bottle, which is very difficult?

Everyone said China holds the key to reining in a nuclear North

Korea. Many have been enthusiastic about Beijing’s surprisingly

constructive attitude. The Japanese press reported that Beijing

even temporarily cut the flow of oil across the Yalu River. These

drips of oil instead of the usual steady flow were meant to send a

clear message to the North Korean regime to cease its provocative

behavior.

We can all thank the Chinese Government for pressuring North

Korea back to the Six-Party Talks, although a date certain for resumption

remains to be designated, but we should never forget

that Beijing always acts skillfully and practically in its own national

interest. The Chinese leaders saw clearly that the situation

on the Korean Peninsula was getting out of hand.

A number of Japanese and South Korean observers has cautioned

the Committee that we should not be too effusive in our

praise of Beijing. They advise that we should be on guard against

outsourcing the North Korean nuclear problem entirely to Beijing.

If Beijing becomes the key player in resolving the North Korean

nuclear issue while we are engaged elsewhere; I fear potential

long-term dire consequences. As I told former Deputy Secretary

Zoellick last May when he sat where Ambassador Burns now sits,

I fear that the future American generation may awaken from its

Pacific slumber to find that our influence is removed entirely from

the Asian mainland. Then a politically unreformed and assertive

China could be calling the shots in the most vibrant and economic

region in the world. These remain my parting words of caution to

America’s Asian policymakers.

I have also read press reports that our South Korean ally has

been less than stalwart in supporting sanction and other tough

measures which may be needed to rein in Kim Jong-il, but we

should not be concerned. We have the word of no less a figure than

the South Korean President himself. President Roh visited the

Capitol in September and was asked by my good friend, Mr. Lantos,

what would be his government’s reaction to a North Korean

nuclear test. He pledged a firm reaction, including the likely use

of sanctions. The House leadership was all there, including the

Speaker and Ms. Pelosi. We are confident that President Roh is a

man of his word and will keep his pledge to the Congress.

Finally, if diplomacy fails, we would like to hear your thoughts

on implementing inspection of North Korean ships under the Proliferation

Security Initiative, something which our South Korean

ally reportedly does not support.

Interdiction of North Korean ships suspected of carrying weapons

of mass destruction materials would not be without risk, as

Pyongyang has stated publicly. Such measures would constitute an

act of war; and as Korea is a peninsula, not an island, the three

nations sharing the land border with North Korea—China, Russia

and South Korea—must be fully engaged. Without their support in

inspecting contraband across their respective frontiers, naval inspections

could prove risky yet largely ineffective.

I understand we have been in discussions with Australia and

Japan in particular concerning possible naval inspections. Hopefully,

policymakers have considered the delicate history of the region

with regard to any inspections support from Japan. I am concerned

that we would cause alarm among the South Korean populous

if Tokyo has too visible a role in inspection of any Korean

ships, even from the North.

We have a vote pending. Two votes? I think we can stand in recess

until the vote.