Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as the 109th Congress comes to a close over the

next few weeks, I would like to express my appreciation once again

for the bipartisan, dignified and statesmanlike manner in which

you have led this Committee. As we transition to the Democratic

Majority, Mr. Chairman, I pledge to you that we will do our utmost

to ensure a smooth, orderly and dignified transition.

I also would like to join you in commending the new Secretary-

General of the United Nations, with whom I am planning to meet

next Tuesday in New York; and I want to commend you for your

laudatory comments concerning our distinguished witness, Secretary

Burns. He is a remarkable diplomat and is serving our Nation

with extraordinary distinction and effectiveness.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, just 1 week ago, the American people sent a

strong and unmistakable signal to Washington. They want a

change. While much of the public discourse properly focused on

Iraq, it is abundantly clear that a change in our approach toward

North Korea is long overdue.

Several missile shots and a nuclear test later, it is evident that

the Administration’s policy toward North Korea is not an unqualified

success. Without a doubt, the North Koreans bear ultimate responsibility

for the deteriorating situation on the Korean Peninsula.

The isolated leadership in Pyongyang made the profoundly

unwise decision to try to become a nuclear nation, to test medium and

long-range missiles, and to continue their unchecked violations

of the human rights of North Korea’s 24 million citizens. But with

the proper combination of forceful action and high-level diplomacy,

there is a chance, though slim, that we can find a comprehensive

and verifiable solution to the North Korea problem.

In light of North Korea’s nuclear test, it is imperative that

Pyongyang understand the full consequences of its unwise decision.

The UN Security Council resolution passed in the test’s aftermath

must be fully enforced, and we must impress upon China and

South Korea that the Security Council resolution will be meaningless

without their full and active cooperation.

I have seen on two recent occasions firsthand the need to cut off

the sale of luxury goods to North Korea pursuant to the Security

Council resolution. During my first visit to Pyongyang, I met with

high-ranking generals in the North Korean military. At the conclusion

of the meeting, the generals climbed into late-model Mercedes-

Benz sedans waiting to whisk them back to their villas. Meanwhile,

the children of North Korea continue to survive on starvation rations,

their growth permanently stunted due to malnutrition.

The single most dramatic fact I brought back with me from

North Korea from both of my visits is that the average height of

the North Korean is dramatically less than the average height of

the South Korean. This is a mind-boggling fact. It would be analogous

to suggesting that people west of the Mississippi are 5 inches

shorter than people east of the Mississippi. This is the result of the

deliberate policies of an unacceptable regime.

This juxtaposition of privilege and deprivation is one of the

world’s great scandals, Mr. Chairman. The pampered North Korean

leadership must feel personal pain for their destabilizing and irresponsible

actions.

But tough new steps against North Korea are not a substitute for

a comprehensive and effective new approach toward this seemingly

intractable problem. Heightened diplomacy, including new bilateral

overtures, must be part of a new bold approach. We should all welcome

the forthcoming resumption of the Six-Party Talks, but unless

the Administration tries something new on the diplomatic front

they will once again end in disappointment.

For that reason, Mr. Chairman, I believe Ambassador Chris Hill

must be dispatched to Beijing with the authority to negotiate a

comprehensive and verifiable deal. Hardliners launched in the Office

of the Vice President and the Defense Department must not be

given a veto. Ambassador Hill must also make a stopover in

Pyongyang on his way back from the Six-Party Talks, not to negotiate

a new and separate deal but rather to demonstrate to

Pyongyang our peaceful intent. The Administration’s refusal to

allow visits by American diplomats to North Korea must end, and

it must end now.

Even with enhanced diplomacy and tough implementation of UN

Security Council sanctions, a denuclearized Korean Peninsula may

prove elusive. North Korea may have made the decision to firmly

enshrine themselves among the list of nuclear nations and to hang

on to power at all costs. But we must give diplomacy a try, even

if only to manage our relations with key allies in the region.

Mr. Chairman, the next few months will be a time of great transition

here in Congress and, hopefully, in American foreign policy.

The White House must try a new and bold approach toward the

vexing North Korean crisis as it is now abundantly clear to the

world that our current policies have failed. I look forward to leading

the efforts in Congress to keep North Korea on the front burner

and to pushing the Administration to resolve the feuds within its

own ranks which have hobbled North Korean policy.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.