Mr. President,

today North Korea formally withdrew

from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Treaty. Yet while the United States

has marshaled its military, diplomatic,

and political resources against Iraq

over the past 6 months, too little appears

to have been done with regard to

North Korea, which I believe represents

the most imminent, serious, and dangerous

threat facing the United States.

Over the past few months North

Korea has: expelled International

Atomic Energy Agency inspectors;

moved 8,000 previously canned plutonium

rods back to a reprocessing facility;

started up its Yongbyon nuclear

facility again; scrambled fighter jets to

intercept a U.S. Air Force reconnaissance

plane over the Sea of Japan; and,

threatened to abandon the armistice

that has been in effect since 1953.

We must face facts: North Korea, an

isolated dictatorship, with a collapsed

economy, controlled by its military,

and in possession of nuclear weapons

and the means to deliver them, represents

a clear and present danger.

If the United States does not exercise

leadership and seek a pragmatic approach

to engaging North Korea—pragmatism

that comes not from weakness,

but from strength—we run the risk of

disrupting strategic stability in the

Asia-Pacific region, the most vital political,

military, and economic region

for the United States in the 21st century,

and undermining our international

credibility and global nuclear

nonproliferation efforts.

North Korea is a quasi-Stalinist state

which, since its formal creation in 1948,

has been run by two men—Kim Il Sung,

who died in 1994, and his son, Kim Jong

Il. It is still almost entirely closed to

the Western World, a stark and isolated

country marked by repression

and poverty.

The North Korean people have no access

to outside sources of information,

such as television or radio or the Internet.

The totalitarian discipline of the

North Korean people is dramatically illustrated

by the fact that North Korean

infiltrators commonly commit

suicide rather than allow themselves to

be captured. Only in rare cases have

they been captured before they killed

themselves. That is a measure of fanatical

devotion.

Second, the North Korean economy is

increasingly isolated and stands, in my

view, on the brink of collapse.

In many ways, North Korea is the

‘‘black hole’’ of Northeast Asia. Even

before Russia and China curtailed their

energy and food support in the 1990s,

the North Korean economy was in freefall.

One measure of the dire straits facing

the North Korean economy is the famine

that has gripped that nation for the

past decade. Largely created by gross

human negligence, not natural causes,

it has killed an estimated 2 million

people since the mid-1990s. Although

harvests have improved modestly in recent

years, food shortages are still a

serious problem.

In recognition of this problem, just

last month Secretary of State Powell

announced that the United States

would provide 40,000 tons of food aid to

the North—a modest level compared to

recent years but significant nonetheless.

A second measure of the desperate

situation facing the North Korean

economy is the collapse of its energy

sector.

North Korea’s total electricity consumption

in 2000 was only 65 percent of

what it had been in 1991. North Korea

has resorted to a rationing system for

electricity and often experiences extended

blackouts and power losses due

to an antiquated transmission grid,

and the North Korean agricultural sector

is severely afflicted by a lack of

diesel and power supplies, as well as

spare parts and fertilizer.

Taken together, North Korea’s continuing

isolation, famine, and economic

collapse constitute a humanitarian

crisis, and act as a barrier to

improving cooperation and engagement

in Northeast Asia on a number of

fronts—political, economic, and military.

In early October of 2002, Assistant

Secretary of State James Kelly informed

North Korean officials that the

United States was aware that North

Korea had a program underway to enrich

uranium for use in nuclear weapons.

According to Secretary Kelly, with

whom I have discussed this situation

on several occasions, North Korea initially

denied the allegations, but later

confirmed the U.S. claim. In confirming

that they had an active nuclear

weapons program, they also declared

that the 1994 Agreed Framework

was essentially null and void.

Under the Agreed Framework, signed

by North Korea and the United States:

North Korea would freeze its existing

nuclear program and agree to enhanced

International Atomic Energy Agency,

IAEA, safeguards; the United States

would lead an effort to replace the

DPRK’s graphite-moderated reactors

for related facilities with light-water,

LWR, powerplants; the U.S. pledged to

provide 500,000 tons of heavy fuel oil,

HFO, annually until the LWRs were

completed; both countries would move

toward full normalization of political

and economic relations; both sides

would work together for peace and security

on a nuclear-free Korean peninsula;

and both sides would work to

strengthen the international nuclear

nonproliferation regime.

Implementation of the Agreed

Framework was never perfect. None of

those who negotiated it or worked to

implement it were operating under the

mistaken belief that North Korea was a

‘‘good actor.’’ But the guts of the

deal—international safeguards on

North Korea’s plutonium facilities in

exchange for HFO and the construction

of the LWRs—appeared to be intact

until October 2002, when North Korean

officials acknowledged the existence of

a clandestine program to enrich uranium

for nuclear weapons that is in

violation of the Agreed Framework and

other agreements.

With the Agreed Framework now

null and void, North Korea may well

find in the production of fissile material

a new cash crop, ready for export,

to support its sagging economy.

What makes the North Korean nuclear

program of particular concern is

that North Korea also possesses advanced

missile technology—in fact, it

is the only country on earth that continues

to sell Missile Technology Control

Regime-banned missiles—including

missiles that one day may be capable

of reaching the United States.

North Korea produces a wide range of

ballistic missiles, including extended

range versions of the Soviet-era Scud

missile as well as indigenous medium

range No Dong and Taepo Dong missiles.

In fact, in 1998, North Korea test fired

one of its Taepo Dong missiles over

Japan and into the Pacific.

In addition, since at least 1987, North

Korea has been developing long-range

missiles, including the Taepo Dong 2. A

two-stage Taepo Dong 2 has a range of

approximately 6,000 miles, while a

three-stage version has a 9,300 mile

range, allowing it to hit almost any

point in North America.

North Korea has also developed and

produced cruise missiles. In fact, the

land-to-ship missile fired last month

on the eve of Roh Moo-hyun’s inauguration

as South Korea’s new President,

was a cruise missile believed to

be based on the Chinese Silkworm missile

design.

Exporting missiles is one of the few

sources of hard currency for North

Korea, and in addition to the recent

Scud sale to Yemen, North Korean

leader Kim Jong II has admitted that

Pyongyang sells missile technology to

other nations, including Syria, Iran,

and Libya.

Now, I believe the blame for precipitating

the current crisis lies squarely

with North Korea, which clearly violated

the Agreed Framework by undertaking

its secret uranium enrichment

program.

The government of Kim Jong II has

clearly placed its focus not on feeding

its people but in developing its military,

its missiles, and its nuclear capability

all in defiance of the treaties it

has signed.

Yet it also appears that our own handling

of events on the Korean peninsula

over the past 2 years, as well as our

broader foreign policy rhetoric and

statements have served, ironically, to

fuel North Korea’s paranoia and made

the situation much more difficult to

manage.

Part of the problem was our reluctance

to endorse former President Kim

Dae Jung’s ‘‘Sunshine Policy,’’ a diplomatic

and economic effort by the

South Korean Government to ease tensions

with the North. President Kim

was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in

2000 for precisely these initiatives.

This move was perceived as a major

humiliation in South Korea, helped set

the stage for the rise of anti-Americanism,

and was seen as a sign by the

North that the administration was intent

on a policy of isolation and confrontation.

Next month, when President Roh visits

Washington, I would urge the administration

to take great care to assure

that the United States and South

Korea share a common vision, goal,

and purpose regarding North Korea.

The North Korean situation offers no

easy solution. But over the past several

months it has gone from bad to worse,

and the administration has yet to demonstrate

the degree of high-level seriousness

and commitment necessary to

defuse the crisis.

We cannot allow North Korea to

produce additional nuclear material.

Restarting its production facility will

allow North Korea to develop at least a

half dozen nuclear weapons within 6

months.

It is bad enough that North Korea

might acquire a significant nuclear arsenal

for its own possible use. But even

worse would be North Korea becoming

a plutonium factory selling fissile material

to the highest bidder. As we were

reminded in December when we intercepted

a quasi-legal missile shipment

to Yemen, this is a regime that will

sell anything it develops.

In short, the administration’s justification

for being concerned about

Iraq that it is a brutal dictatorship

that may threaten instability in the

region and may provide WMD to terrorists

is quickly becoming a reality with

North Korea.

A failure to stop North Korea’s nuclear

program is sending a terrible

message to other rogue states and to

our friends and allies as well. Every

would-be proliferator is measuring our

response to North Korea as they consider

how to chart their futures.

And a nuclear North Korea may lead

friends in the region, like Japan and

South Korea, to conclude that they

have to increase their military capabilities,

sparking an arms race in Asia

and drawing China, India, and Pakistan

into a regionwide cycle of escalation.

At the end of the day, I believe that

we face the same three basic options

today that we did in 1994: We can

launch a preemptive strike against

North Korea’s nuclear facilities; we can

pursue a policy of isolation and containment;

or, we can seek to persuade

North Korea to abandon its nuclear

ambitions through negotiations.

In reality, a preemptive strike is not

a feasible option.

First, while we might be able to take

out Yongbyon and other well-known

sites, we simply don’t know where all

of North Koreans fissile material, missile,

or nuclear facilities are located.

There are over 10,000 caves and holes in

North Korea. We don’t know the location

of the uranium facility.

Second, launching a preemptive

strike is hardly a palatable option

given the military realities on the

ground at the DMZ. Such a strike

would lead to all-out war on the Korean

peninsula, and although I believe

the U.S. and our allies would emerge

victorious, the price would be high.

Finally, our South Korean allies

strongly reject a preemptive strike,

which should give us pause.

Likewise, there are major problems

with continuing a policy of isolation

and containment, as some in the administration

have argued for. In essence,

isolation and containment appear

unlikely to succeed in toppling a

regime that has been isolated and contained

for so long. And it means that

we have acquiesced to North Korea’s

going nuclear, and to North Korea acquiring

serial production capacity for

nuclear weapons and fissile material.

Furthermore, isolation will not prevent

North Korea from exporting fissile

material to Iran, al-Qaida, or others.

A policy that allows North Korea to

build and retain nuclear weapons and

long-range missiles capable of reaching

the United States, and to possess excess

fissile material and a highly efficient

network to sell or transfer fissile

material to terrorists or other rouge

states, is not in our best interest,

which brings us to the third option negotiations.

I strongly believe that the United

States must signal its willingness to

engage in immediate U.S.-North Korean

negotiations to dismantle North

Korea’s nuclear program in return for

U.S. security assurances to North

Korea, economic assistance and normalized

relations. In fact, as some experts

have suggested, bilateral negotiations

themselves could be premised on

a North Korean commitment not to reprocess

the Yongbyon reactor fuel rods

into plutonium during the discussions.

As we seek creative solutions to engage

North Korea and go forward with

a process of negotiations, it is critical

that we do so in harmony with South

Korea and Japan, and both China and

Russia must also play a major role.

The administration is right that this

crisis is an international problem that

requires the active involvement of the

other powers in the region.

I am particularly pleased to note

that China has, in fact, played a constructive

role in helping to convey to

North Korea the gravity of its current

course.

At the same time, I believe that the

burden of international leadership falls

on the United States, and, as we seek

to engage North Korea diplomatically,

we must move beyond continuing to

argue over the shape of the table or

how many chairs should be at it. Continuing

to do so is little more than an

excuse for those who would prefer to

see the crisis escalate instead of seeking

to solve it.

Although the administration believes,

correctly, that bad behavior

should not be rewarded, it is also a truism

of diplomacy that if you want to

get something you must be prepared to

give something.

And I strongly believe that it is in

the United States’ best interests to get

something from North Korea: That

North Korea cease and desist its nuclear

activities and stop proliferating

missiles.

So I believe that it is imperative to

think creatively about inducements

that can be offered to induce North

Korea to relinquish its nuclear ambitions.

Implementation of several relatively

modest nonnuclear energy sector

initiatives—introducing market institutions

to the North Korean energy

sector; undertaking efforts to repair

the existing electric grid; rehabilitating

coal supply and transport; eliminating

waste; and underwriting smallscale

renewable projects—would provide

for a stable energy sector for

North Korea in the near and intermediate

term. And, as part of a process

of larger diplomatic engagement with

North Korea, this can contribute significantly

to defusing the current crisis.

There is no evidence that North

Korea has started to reprocess. North

Korea may well be determined to go

down the nuclear path and a nuclear

North Korea may well be an unavoidable

consequence of the current crisis.

But nothing is yet set in stone, and at

a time of increasing uncertainty the

world looks to the United States to

lead. And there is no better way to underscore

our seriousness than through

direct negotiations. Such talks are all

the more important when dealing with

an isolated, tyrannical and bellicose

regime, because miscommunication

can all too easily lead to miscalculation,

with possibly catastrophic consequences.