I want to address

the body quickly and briefly but importantly

on what is happening in North

Korea and to North Korean refugees

coming out of that country.

Prior to the July 4th recess, my colleagues,

Senator KENNEDY and Senator

ALLEN, and I brought to light the

plight of North Korean refugees in a

hearing before the Immigration Subcommittee.

The hearing capped a

month of activity that involved the

passage of resolution on North Korean

refugees in both the House and the

Seante. Both resolutions strongly

urged the Chinese government not to

repatriate North Korean refugees back

to North Korea. The House version

passed by 406 to 0 and our resolution

passed by unanimous consent on June

19, 2002.

At our hearing, we heard some very

moving testimony from Ms. Lee Soon-

Ok, a North Korean defector who suffered

more than five years in a prison

camp. We also heard from Ms. Helie

Lee, a Korean American writer whose

memoir, In the Absence of the Sun,

movingly highlighted a largely hidden

and painful secret shared by hundreds

of thousands of Korean Americans and

millions of Koreans—more than 50

years of separation among family

members and loved ones since the outbreak

of the Korean War. Few other

country and its people has suffered as

much.

In addition, Mr. President, I urged

Secretary Powell in both a formal consultation

and by correspondence on the

need of our Department of State to

allow the processing of North Korean

refugees together with the Chinese government

and the Beijing office of the

United Nations High Commissioner on

Refugees.

The plight of North Korean refugees,

of course, is merely a symptom of a far

more pressing issue—how to deal with

one of the most repressive and totalitarian

states in the world, the isolated

country of North Korea ruled by one

man, Kim Jong-il.

Although news regarding the efforts

of many in the NGO community and

countless others working in North East

China have been slowly filtering into

the West, the true nature of the North

Korean regime is largely hidden and inaccessible.

It was not until the showing of a dramatic

video of five members of the

Han-mee family being forcibly removed

from the Japanese consulate in Beijing

that the world began to pay attention.

Since then, several other asylum bids

have drawn the attention of mainstream

media, including the horrifying

story of baby-killings in North Korean

prison camps reported in the New York

Times and based on the testimony of

Ms. Soon Ok Lee, who, as I indicated

before, testified at our hearing.

In June 2002, ABC Nightime broadcast

a three-part documentary of the

North Korean refugee in China by Ms.

Kim Jung-eun whose schedule did not

permit her to testify before our committee.

I was told by ABC News staff

that thousands of Americans have responded

to the broadcast with e-mails

in disbelief and in rage against the

North Korean regime. I understand

that the three programs drew high response

from viewers.

It is estimated that between 2 to 3

million people died of starvation and

persecution in North Korea from 1995

through 1998 and that up to up to

300,000 North Korean refugees in China

are living a precarious and dangerous

life, hiding by day, begging by night, in

an effort to avoid being captured and

repatriated back to North Korea by

Chinese and North Korean agents brazenly

operating inside China

Of the 300,000 refugees, only 518 refugees

successfully defected to South

Korea this year through June 2002,

many of them by taking refuge at foreign

missions in Beijing and in

Shenyang, China.

These actions by the Chinese are simply

unacceptable, not only to basic

principles and tenets of international

human rights, but also by the fact that

China is a signatory of the International

Refugees Convention. Hundreds

of South Korean, Japanese and

western NGO’s are working inside

China to help the refugees, risking

their lives and capture by the Chinese

police. A German doctor who also testified

before our committee worked in

North Korea for a year and a half but

was evicted by the North Korean regime

for disclosing the tragedies of the

NK people. People like him and others

on the ground in China and Korea have

been some of the most vocal and active

in their effort to make the whole world

aware of the conditions in North Korea

and China. Many NGO’s have taken

care of refugee families full-time with

their own money.

I’ve met with many of these people,

all of whom are now effectively shut

down from operating in China. And

what they tell me over and over is that

they simply cannot not ignore what

they saw. All of them said to me that

they could not look away and ignore

the refugees, many of whom were too

scared to even beg for help.

These NGO’s from South Korea,

Japan, the U.S., France, and Germany,

first reported the tragedy of the North

Koreans to the outside world. These

NGOs who are in the best position to

know report that food aid from South

Korea, the U.S., and Japan, simply are

not reaching the dying people. As I

mentioned in a previous statement, I

believe it is absolutely necessary to

condition stringent monitoring of the

delivery of food aid by NGOs in an effort

to determine that they are being

distributed appropriately. Much of this

aid is apparently being diverted to feed

the million-plus North Korean army

and to reward the elites and the inner

circle around Kim Jong-il in

Pyongyang. For this reason, many

well-respected NGOs, including Doctors

Without Borders have withdrawn from

North Korea.

More troubling is that these NGO’s

have confirmed reports of more than a

dozen prison camps in North Korea,

where the prisoners are starved, forced

to work at hard labor, and tortured to

death.

Aside from the troubling refugee

issue, we cannot forget that North

Korea is a threat to regional and global

security. North Korea continues its

procurement of materials and components

for its ballistic missile programs

from foreign sources, especially

through North Korean firms based in

China. In addition, North Korea has become

a ‘‘secondary supplier’’ of missile

technology and expertise to several

countries in the Middle East, South

Asia and North Africa. The CIA’s 2001

report assesses that North Korea is capable

of producing and delivering via

missile warheads or other munitions a

variety of chemical agents and possibly

some biological.

Furthermore, North Korea refuses to

carry out its obligations under the Nuclear

Nonproliferation Treaty, NPT

and the 1994 Agreed Framework. Initial

IAEA, International Atomic Energy

Agency, inspections and intelligence

reports in the early 1990s triggered concerns

regarding a clandestine nuclear

weapons program. U.S. and foreign intelligence

have concluded that the

DPRK government of North Korea

probably has sufficient plutonium for 1

to 5 nuclear weapons. Despite its obligations

under the NPT and the Agreed

Framework, North Korea continues to

refuse inspections.

So while it would be reason enough

to continue our pressure on North

Korea and China for the humanitarian

violations alone, there are also the

pressing security threats that the current

North Korean government poses

to U.S. interests which must be dealt

with. While refugee and nuclear weapons

issues will necessitate very different

responses—the thing they share

in common is the alarms they raise

about ignoring the North Korean problem

in all its complexity.

While I am mindful of the diplomatic

sensitivities regarding the need to

reach out to the North Korean regime,

there comes a time when we have to

confront the truth and tell the truth.

Moreover, reconciliation efforts have

yet to yield any results. There was

much hope after the historic meeting

between President Kim Dae Jung and

Jong-il in June 2000, that such a gesture

would bring about some meaningful

change.

As the naval skirmish last month

and the continuing problems with the

North Korean refugees show, the North

Korean issue has simply worsened. It’s

time for the North Korean regime to

immediately allow international monitoring

of food aid into the country and

to work with the international NGO

community to alleviate the suffering of

its people. That may at least stem the

tide of refugees crossing over into

China and being prey to human traffickers

and other difficulties faced by

refugees. But more fundamentally, the

North regime itself must begin to

change itself and join the rest of the

world in giving hope and freedom to its

people.

The U.S. can not afford to give into

the slow-walking of reforms in North

Korea. For our own security, for the

stability of the region and for the sake

of basic human rights—North Korea

must remain a top policy focus for U.S.

foreign policy. We must keep clear and

constant pressure on NK and neighboring

countries to bring new leadership

into being. This is a daunting

task, but one that we can not afford to

shirk.

We have significant refugee flight

taking place out of North Korea. We

have had hearings in the Senate Immigration

Committee on this particular

topic. We have a humanitarian crisis,

probably the largest in the world, that

is taking place. We estimate that there

are between 2 to 3 million people who

have died of starvation and persecution

in North Korea from 1995 to 1998, in a 3-

year time period—2 to 3 million people.

Nobody knows for sure because outside

observers are not allowed.

This Nation is the most repressive,

closed regime in the world today. The

world community is feeding those who

are left in North Korea. The United

States and a number of other donating

countries are feeding about half of the

population in North Korea. Much of the

food aid we are giving North Korea is

not getting out to where it is needed. It

is still held by the leadership in that

country.

We estimate that some 300,000 North

Korean refugees are living in China

today in a precarious and dangerous

lifestyle. They are hiding by day and

begging by night, trying to keep from

being caught and sent back into North

Korea, which is what China does. If

they catch people from North Korea,

they treat them as economic migrants

and ship them back into starvation,

refugee camps, persecution, and probably

death.

Of the 300,000 refugees in China, only

518 refugees have successfully defected,

gotten out of China and into South

Korea or into another third country—

that is this year, through June of 2002.

Many of them have done it by taking

refugee status at foreign missions in

Beijing and Shenyang, China. They

have rushed embassies in those communities,

gotten inside, asked for political

asylum, it has been granted, and

they passed to South Korea, generally

through a third country—many times

through the Philippines. I say only 518

this year. If you look at the history

since the Korean conflict has ended—

now 50 years ago—there have been only

several thousand who have defected

from North Korea into South Korea.

Generally, each year, it has been a

trickle—maybe in the teens.

The North Korean regime has been

able to keep people in a dogmatic system,

saying this regime is the best in

the world and saying they are being fed

by the President and the leadership.

Now that trickle is beginning to really

move. They believe it may be up to a

thousand; there may be a thousand or

more defecting this year alone, which

is a massive number considering the

history.

Mr. President, the issue I want to

bring to light is the role of China and

the importance of China in allowing

these people to live. If China will allow

these people to pass through, or if

China will allow the U.N. Commission,

or the High Commission on Refugees to

establish a processing center to determine

if these are people who need to be

allowed to pass into third countries,

thousands if not millions of people will

not have to live in North Korea. If

China does not, you are going to see

thousands, possibly millions more, die

of starvation, persecution, and other

causes.

China has a choice. They will choose

what the status is going to be, whether

these people will live or die. They need

to be confronted directly and asked to

let these people live, to let them pass

through. Let them pass through to

Mongolia, to South Korea, to other

places; but don’t send them back. If

they don’t want to have them stay in

China, allow some place for them to go

through, such as a refugee center. But,

China, make the choice. It is your responsibility

and their blood that will

be on your call as to what you determine

you are going to do in this particular

situation.

North Korea is a country that is difficult

for us or anybody else in the

world to influence. China is the only

country in the world that has some influence

on North Korea. So it is going

to be their choice as to whether these

people will live or die.

North Korea needs to change its regime.

I don’t need to remind Members

of the Senate of the other problems we

have with North Korea. They are a supplier

of weapons. North Korea has become

a secondary supplier of missile

technology and expertise to several

countries in the Middle East, South

Asia, and North Africa. The CIA’s 2001

report assesses that North Korea is capable

of producing and delivering via

missile warheads, or other munitions, a

variety of chemical agents and possibly

some biological agents as well.

Mr. President, I draw this to the attention

of my colleagues because we

need to allow refugees to pass and

come into the United States as well.

We will be bringing this issue up again

in front of this body. I hope we will put

pressure on China, which doesn’t have

a good human rights record, so that

they can act to save people’s lives—if

they will only allow these people to

pass through.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.