Mr. President,

we have heard some weighty subjects

discussed here today. The Senator

from New Hampshire was discussing

the issue of education. Prior to that,

Senators from Utah and New Jersey

were talking about tax policy, trying

to get our sickly economy revved up

and moving again. If those were not

enough of weighty subjects to talk

about, I want to bring up one of grave

concern to the foreign policy of this

United States, indeed to the very defense

of these United States: That is

the subject of North Korea.

I rise today to speak on this subject

as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations

Committee. This question of

development of nuclear weapons by

North Korea is something we should

address. That is the occasion to which

I rise today.

Over half a century we have seen

North Korea struggle along in its totalitarian,

repressive regime. If there

is any question about that, look at the

fruits of that repressive labor—the

starvation there among the people

while the leaders, indeed, lead very

comfortable and cushy lives. Nobody

questions the starvation among the

people in North Korea. The free world

has been trying to do something about

it.

To those in this Chamber who have

had the privilege, as I have, of going to

the DMZ, to the line, to see the stark

differences on either side of the line, it

is very apparent. One, is a side that is

lush in vegetation, highly developed.

Then, just looking across the line, you

see quite a contrast with the sparse

vegetation on the north side of the

line.

But I saw North Korea also from a

different perspective, from the window

of a spacecraft on the night side of the

Earth. There is quite a contrast for the

lights reflecting from Earth back up

into space—there is a distinct difference

between North and South

Korea from space at night. The South

Korean peninsula is lit up, vibrant in

its economic activity, whereas north of

the line there are very few lights discernible

from the view of the window of

the spacecraft.

In North Korea, we have had a regime

that has isolated its own country.

Now this situation is urgent, vis-a-vis

the foreign policy of the United States.

It requires sustained attention from

our administration even as we deal

with a separate and growing crisis in

Iraq. Unfortunately, the Bush administration

is approaching the events on

the Korean peninsula in an inconsistent

and incoherent way, in the

opinion of this Senator, even as it continues

to build up our forces in the Persian

Gulf region.

This is dangerous. We cannot, in my

opinion, and we must not, allow the

North Koreans to develop an effective

nuclear weapons arsenal. Yet it is a

very difficult situation. Go back to

1994. The Clinton administration faced

a similar crisis in 1994, which it averted

by striking an agreement with North

Korea. This Agreed Framework provided

the United States would provide

North Korea with economic assistance

and more open diplomatic communication

in exchange for a cessation of operations

and infrastructure development

of reactors and facilities used to

build its nuclear weapons program.

This agreement, while flawed, allowed

the United Nations to come in and

monitor the disposal of the plutonium

rods to ensure they would not be used

to develop weapons. Indeed, it helped

prevent North Korea from having dozens

of nuclear weapons by now.

One year ago, President Bush, in his

State of the Union speech, referred to

North Korea as a member of the axis of

evil for its repressive and brutal actions

against their own population. In

that respect the President was correct.

But we see now what the consequences

of that speech are. Instead of

speaking softly and carrying a big

stick, President Bush decided to speak

harshly without a coherent policy to

back it up. Though this pronouncement

did not cause the North Koreans to

begin their bad behavior and cheat on

their agreements—it certainly didn’t

cause them to start that bad behavior

or cheat on their agreements with the

United States and the international

community which, by the way, the

North Koreans have now admitted—it

did embolden them to harden their position,

to renounce the 1994 agreement

and to begin in earnest to openly pursue

more nuclear weapons.

This is now the situation in which

the Bush administration, by its own

words, has painted our Nation into a

very difficult corner.

U.S. policy regarding North Korea

has been inconsistent. The President

has demanded North Korea give up its

nuclear weapons programs, which is a

good starting point. He said he wants

to solve this peacefully, through diplomatic

means, but until this week—indeed,

until day before yesterday—the

President refused even to speak directly

to the North Koreans. The administration

has said it wanted to isolate

North Korea, possibly with sanctions.

Look around the world. That option

is opposed vehemently by the governments,

friendly to us, of South Korea

and Japan. Even China has stated its

position, that it supports a non-nuclear

Korean peninsula. Yet the administration

has scarcely engaged the Chinese

in a meaningful way. We ought to be

encouraging them to join us to stop the

development of North Korean nuclear

weapons.

Russia also needs to be included in

these discussions. The lack of a clear

strategy increases the risk of a volatile

and destabilized atmosphere in the face

of a North Korean nuclear threat. This

danger is underscored by today’s news

that North Korea has announced its

immediate withdrawal from the Nuclear

Non-proliferation Treaty. U.S.

leadership is needed for the world’s declared

nuclear powers to work together,

perhaps through the United Nations,

in a common response to this immediate

danger.

If we fail to do so, the nightmare scenario

of North Korea selling its nuclear

weapons to terrorist groups and other

rogue states and other provocations

could become a reality.

I welcome the President’s belated decision

to engage the North Koreans directly.

I hope it has not come too late.

I also hope that these talks will be conducted

at the highest possible levels.

We must make North Korea understand

that the building of an arsenal of nuclear

weapons will not be tolerated,

and that all options to combat this

threat are on the table.

At the same time, we must work to

form a viable, regional solution with

South Korea, Japan, China, and Russia.

No policy that we pursue can possibly

work unless it is carried out in consultation

with these key countries. We

must devise workable policy options

that the United States and North

Korea may consider to de-escalate the

situation immediately. These talks

must be substantive and be conducted

in good faith, which has been a consistent

problem over the years with

North Korea—but now the world is

watching—immediately, now.

Finally, I hope that the Senate Foreign

Relations Committee will hold

hearings on North Korea as soon as

possible. Hearings should explore the

administration’s detailed plans and

policy prescriptions for this crisis and

its implications. I know Senators

LUGAR and BIDEN care a great deal

about this. I thank them for their leadership.

I call upon President Bush to stop

sending mixed signals on this urgent

matter. Consistency in policy and leadership

is demanded in these very hazardous

and uncertain times. Then one

day, maybe from the window of a future

spacecraft—with a North Korea

that has become a part of the world

community of nations, a North Korea

that reaches out in friendship to her

neighbors—then maybe one day from

the window of a future spacecraft on

the night side of the Earth, we can

look down and see a North Korea joining

a South Korea lit up like a glittering

jewel showing economic and political

progress and freedom in that

part of the world.

Thank you for the opportunity to address

this most important matter.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.