Mr. President, I rise

today to talk about the situation in

North Korea. Today President Kim

Dae-jung of South Korea is meeting

with President Bush as part of his official

state visit. His visit occurs against

a hopeful backdrop of the third round

of family reunions on the divided Korean

peninsula. Fathers are greeting

their grownup sons; sisters are hugging

their sisters they haven’t seen for a

generation. Grandmothers are meeting

their grandchildren who they have

never met.

Tomorrow the distinguished chairman

of the Senate Foreign Affairs

Committee and I will host the President

of South Korea for coffee here on

Capitol Hill. Kim’s visit will give us a

chance to renew the close bonds forged

in blood in the common struggle

against the forces of oppression which

unite our people in the United States

and South Korea.

I rise today to talk a little bit about

the Korean peninsula and the important

role the United States can play in

concert with our South Korean allies

and other friends to help build lasting

peace on that peninsula.

Yesterday the New York Times published

an article by veteran defense

correspondent Michael Gordon which

suggests that a missile deal with North

Korea may have been within reach last

year. As fascinating as this rendition

of events was and as fascinating as the

policies were, we now have a new President.

The failure or the judgment to

not proceed with negotiations into the

month of January of this year on the

part of the new President is in fact at

this moment irrelevant. We have a new

President and a new administration.

The question squarely now is not

whether President Clinton should have

gone to North Korea; the question is

whether this administration, the Bush

administration, is going to build on the

progress made over the past 5 years

since we narrowly averted a nuclear

showdown on the Korean peninsula.

I was pleased to see Secretary of

State Powell quoted in a Washington

Post article today, suggesting this administration

was going to pursue the

possibilities of a better relationship

with North Korea and was going to

leave nothing on the table. I was

slightly dismayed to read of an informed

source in the administration

who chose not to be identified, demonstrating

a great deal more of what

seemed to me in the article to be not

only skepticism, which I share about

the intentions of North Korea, but willingness

to pursue vigorously the possibilities

of further negotiations. Hopefully,

I am misreading that unidentified

highly placed administration official.

In my view, there is only one correct

answer and that is the one Secretary

Powell has indicated today. For it

would be irresponsible not to explore to

discover whether North Korea is prepared

to abandon its pursuit of longrange

missiles in response to a serious

proposal from the United States, our

friends, and our allies.

North Korea confronts the United

States with a number of security challenges.

North Korea maintains a huge

army of more than 1 million men and

women in uniform, about 5 percent of

its entire population. Many of that

army are poised on the South Korean

border. The threat that North Korea

opposes extends well beyond the Korean

peninsula. Its Nodong missile can

not only strike all of South Korea but

can also threaten our ally, Japan.

North Korea sells those same missiles

to anyone who has the cash to buy

them. North Korean missile exports to

Iran and Pakistan have guaranteed,

unfortunately, that any future war in

the Middle East or South Asia will be

even more dangerous and more destructive

than past conflicts in that region.

North Korean missiles and the very

real concern that North Korea might

even build longer range missiles capable

of striking the United States are a

driving force behind our plans to build

a national missile defense system.

If we can remove that threat, that is,

the threat from North Korea longrange

missile possibility, the impact

will be huge, not only on the security

of Northeast Asia but also on our own

defense strategy as we debate how best

to deal with our vulnerability to weapons

of mass destruction.

For most of the past 50 years, U.S.

soldiers of the 2d Infantry Division

have looked north from their positions

along the DMV at North Korean adversaries

that appeared unchanging—a

hermit kingdom, locked in a Stalinist

time warp. Indeed, 2 or 3 years ago if I

had spoken to the American people

about landmines, the 38th parallel, and

the armies of North and South Korea,

it would have been to discuss the latest

northern incursion along what remains

the most heavily armed border in the

world. The troops of the 2d Infantry Division

are still standing shoulder to

shoulder with our South Korean allies.

The landmines are still there. And

much of the tension along the DMZ remains

unabated, at least for now.

But maybe, just maybe, things are

beginning to change.

The United States should end our

‘‘prevent defense’’ and go on the offensive

to advance our vital interests—

particularly the dismantlement of

North Korea’s long-range missile program.

Now is not the time for lengthy

policy reviews or foot-dragging on existing

commitments. Now is the time

to forge ahead and test North Korea’s

commitment to peace.

A few weeks ago what had been unthinkable—

the opening of direct rail

transport across the DMZ—became a

near term achievable objective. The

militaries of North and South Korea

will soon begin to reconstruct the rail

links connecting Seoul not only to

Pyongyang, but also to China, Russia,

and Western Europe.

I remember vividly the moment when

the people of East and West Berlin decided

to tear down the Berlin Wall.

The Berlin Wall had become a true

anachronism: a graffiti-strewn relic of

a morally, politically, and economically

bankrupt Soviet regime. Once the

East German people had torn down the

ideological walls in their own minds,

tearing down the concrete was a piece

of cake.

The people of North and South Korea

are not there yet. But the walls are

under siege. The establishment of direct

rail links will represent a major

breach in the walls of fear, insecurity,

and isolation which have built up over

the past 50 years.

Last October, I spoke to this body

about testing North Korea’s willingness

to abandon its pursuit of weapons

of mass destruction. At that time, I

pointed to some of the hopeful signs

that North Korea was interested in improving

its relations with its neighbors—

a missile launch moratorium

now more than 2 years old, summit

meetings with South Korea, Russia,

and China, and the first tentative steps

toward economic reform.

I attributed these North Korean actions

to the ‘‘Sunshine Policy’’ crafted

by South Korean President Kim Daejung,

and to the hard-headed engagement

strategy implemented by former

Secretary of Defense William Perry on

behalf of the Clinton administration.

Since last fall, evidence has mounted

steadily that North Korea’s leader Kim

Jong-il has indeed decided that nothing

short of a major overhaul of his economic

system and diplomatic relations

is likely to pull his country back from

the brink of starvation and economic

collapse.

In addition to the progress on rail

links, here are some of the other recent

developments:

North Korea has expanded cooperation

to search for the remains of Americans

missing in action from the Korean

war. Uniformed U.S. military personnel

are working along side their

North Korean counterparts, searching

the rice paddies, often in remote areas,

in an effort to solve 50-year-old mysteries.

The North has continued modest

steps to allow family reunions across

the DMZ, exposing people from the

North to the quality of life enjoyed by

their brothers and sisters in the South.

More than 300 families have enjoyed reunion

visits, and more are scheduled.

The North has toned down its customary

harsh rhetoric about the U.S.

and South Korea, substituting a steady

diet of editorials outlining the North’s

plans to make economic revitalization

its top priority.

North Korea for the first time last

November opened its food distribution

system to South Korean inspection and

also provided a detailed accounting of

food aid distribution.

North and South Korea have held defense

talks at both the ministerial

level and subsequently at the working

level, and have agreed, at the urging of

South Korea, to improve military to

military communications. This is the

first step toward confidence building

measures that can reduce the likelihood

that a relatively minor incident

along the DMZ might escalate into

war.

North and South have established an

economic cooperation panel and

launched a joint study of North Korea’s

energy needs.

North and South Korean flood control

experts met last month in

Pyongyang for talks on cooperation in

efforts along the Imjin River, which

crosses the border between the two

countries.

The North Koreans have dispatched a

team of financial experts to Washington

to examine what it would take

for North Korea to earn support from

international financial institutions

once it has taken the steps necessary

to satisfy U.S. anti-terrorism laws.

And, as I mentioned above, the North

has not test-fired a missile for more

than 21⁄2 years, and has pledged not to

do so while negotiations with the

United States on the North’s missile

program continue.

Five years ago when people spoke of

‘‘North Korean offensives,’’ they were

referring to the threat of a North Korean

assault across the DMZ.

Today, Kim Jong-il is mounting an

offensive, but it is a diplomatic and

economic offensive, not a military one.

Over the past 12 months, North Korea

has established diplomatic relations

with almost all of the nations of Western

Europe. Planning is underway for

an unprecedented trip by Kim Jong-il

to Seoul to meet with President Kim

Dae-jung later this year.

Finally, Kim Jong-il’s has publicly

embraced China’s model of economic

reform. His celebrated January visit to

Shanghai and his open praise of Chinese

economic reforms indicates that

Kim is driving North Korea toward a

future in which it would be more closely

integrated economically and politically

to the rest of East Asia and the

world.

What are we to make of all of this?

How should we respond?

I want to be clear about why I find

these developments so promising. I am

not a fan of Kim Jong-il. No one should

think that his motives are noble or humanitarian.

Over the years, Kim Jong-il has

shown himself willing to go to any

length—including state-sponsored terrorism—

to preserve his regime.

I have no reason to believe he has

abandoned his love of dictatorship in

favor of constitutional democracy. Far

from it.

Kim Jong-il is betting that he can

emerge from a process of change at the

head of a North Korean society that is

more prosperous, stable, and militarily

capable than it is today, but still a dictatorship.

But frankly, the reasons why Kim

Jong-il is pursuing economic reform

and diplomatic opening are not as important

as the steps he will have to

take along the way.

If North Korea’s opening is to succeed,

the North will have to address

many of the fundamentals which make

it so threatening—especially the gross

distortion of its domestic spending priorities

in favor of the military. The

North cannot revitalize its economy

while spending 25 percent of its gross

domestic product on weaponry.

The North cannot obtain meaningful,

sustained foreign investment without

addressing the lack of transparency in

its economy as well as the absence of

laws and institutions to protect investors

and facilitate international trade.

North Korea’s pursuit of economic

reform and diplomatic opening presents

the United States with a golden

opportunity, if we are wise enough to

seize it.

We should welcome the emergence of

North Korea from its shell not because

North Korea’s motives are benign, but

because we have a chance, in concert

with our allies, to shape its transformation

into a less threatening country.

If we play our cards right, North Korea’s

opening can lead to a less authoritarian

regime that is more respectful

of international norms—all without

any shots being fired in anger.

I point out, a number of old Communist

dictators had thought they

could move in an easy transition from

the Communist regime that has clearly

failed to a market economy, or integration

with the rest of the world, and

still maintain their power.

None, none—none has succeeded thus

far. I believe it is an oxymoron to suggest

that North Korea can emerge and

become an engaged partner in world

trade without having to fundamentally

change itself and in the process, I believe,

end up a country very different

from what we have now.

I am delighted that Secretary Powell

has expressed his support for this hardheaded

brand of engagement with

North Korea. As he testified before the

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

last month:

We are open to a continued process of engagement

with the North so long as it addresses

political, economic, and security

concerns, is reciprocal, and does not come at

the expense of our alliance relationships.

This is precisely the kind of engagement

I have in mind. I think we should

get on with it.

North Korea knows that under our

nonproliferation laws it cannot gain

unfettered access to trade, investment,

and technology without first halting

its development and export of longrange

ballistic missile technology and

submitting its nuclear program to fullscope

safeguards under the auspices of

the International Atomic Energy Agency.

North Korea knows it won’t get

World Bank loans as long as it remains

on our list of nations that condone

international terrorism or provide

sanctuary for terrorists. In order to get

off that list, North Korea must end all

support for terrorist organizations and

must cooperate fully with the Japanese

government to resolve the question of

Japanese citizens abducted from

Japan—some more than 20 years ago.

In other words, Mr. President, if

North Korea is to turn around its moribund

economy and fully normalize relations

with its neighbors, it will have

to take steps which are demonstrably

in our national interest and in the national

interests of our allies.

We should do everything in our power

to ensure that North Korea does not diverge

from the path it is now on.

Specifically, we should continue to

provide generous humanitarian relief

to starving North Korean children.

Nothing about the situation on the peninsula

will be improved by the suffering

of North Korean children racked

by hunger and disease.

We should continue to abide by the

terms of the Agreed Framework, so

long as North Korea does the same. We

should not unilaterally start moving

the goal posts. The Agreed Framework

has effectively capped the North’s ability

to produce fissile material with

which to construct nuclear weapons.

Under the terms of Agreed Framework,

North Korea placed its nuclear program

under International Atomic Energy

Agency safeguards and halted

work on two unfinished heavy water

nuclear reactors in exchange for the

promise of proliferation-resistant light

water nuclear reactors and heavy fuel

oil deliveries for electric power generation.

Without the Agreed Framework,

North Korea might already have sufficient

fissile material with which to

construct dozens of nuclear bombs.

MISSILE AGREEMENT POSSIBLE—PATIENCE

REQUIRED

Finally, Mr. President, we should engage

North Korea in a serious diplomatic

effort aimed at an iron-clad

agreement to end forever the North’s

pursuit of long range missiles.

In discussions with U.S., Russian,

and Chinese officials, North Korea has

signaled its willingness to give up the

export, and possibly the development,

of long-range missiles, in response to

the right package of incentives. Such

an agreement would remove a direct

North Korean threat to the region and

improve prospects for North-South reconciliation.

It would also remove a

major source of missiles and missile

technology for countries such as Iran.

Getting an agreement will not be

easy, but it helps a lot that we are not

the only country which would benefit

from the dismantlement of North Korea’s

missile program. Our allies South

Korea and Japan, our European allies

who already provide financial support

for the Agreed Framework, the Chinese,

the Russians, all share a desire to

see North Korea devote its meager resources

to food, not rockets. The only

countries which want to see North

Korea building missiles are its disreputable

customers.

A tough, verifiable agreement to

eliminate the North’s long-range missile

threat might be possible in exchange

for reasonable U.S. assistance

that would help North Korea feed itself

and help convert missile plants to

peaceful manufacturing.

Some people are impatient for

change in North Korea. They want to

adopt a more confrontational approach,

including rushing ahead to deploy

an unproven, hugely expensive,

and potentially destabilizing national

missile defense system.

I understand their frustration and

share their desire for action against

the threat of North Korean ballistic

missiles.

But foreclosing diplomatic options by

rushing to deploy NMD is not the right

antidote. Sure, a limited ground-based

national missile defense might someday

be capable of shooting down a

handful of North Korean missiles

aimed at Los Angeles, but it will do

nothing to defend our Asian allies from

a North Korean missile attack.

Nor will it defend us from a nuclear

bomb smuggled into the country

aboard a fishing trawler or a biological

toxin released into our water supply.

NMD will not defend U.S. forces on

Okinawa or elsewhere in the Pacific

theater. It will do nothing to prevent

North Korea from wielding weapons of

mass destruction against Seoul, much

of which is actually within artillery

range of North Korea.

Moreover, a rush to deploy an

unproven national missile defense, particularly

absent a meaningful strategic

dialog with china, could jeopardize the

cooperative role China has played in

recent years on the Korean Peninsula.

Given our common interest in preventing

North Korea from becoming a

nuclear weapons power, the United

States and China should work in concert,

not at cross purposes.

OPENING NORTH KOREAN EYES

North Korea’s opening has given the

North Korean people a fresh look at

the outside world—like a gopher coming

out of its hole—with consequences

which could be profound over the long

haul. Hundreds of foreigners are in

North Korea today, compared with a

handful just a few years ago.

Foreigners increasingly are free to

travel widely in the country and talk

to average North Koreans without government

interference. North Korea has

even begun to issue tourist visas. The

presence of foreigners in North Korea

is gradually changing North Korean attitudes

about South Korea and the

West.

One American with a long history of

working in North Korea illustrated the

change underway by describing an impromptu

encounter he had recently.

While he was out on an unescorted

morning walk, a North Korean woman

approached him and said,

Her expression translates roughly

into

The American replied goodnaturedly,

To which the woman replied quite

sincerely,

Another American, a State Department

official accompanying a World

Food Program inspection team, noted

that hundreds of people along the road

waved and smiled, and in the case of

soldiers, saluted, as the convoy passed.

He also reports that many of 80 million

woven nylon bags used to distribute

grain and emblazoned with the

letters ‘‘U.S.A.’’ are being recycled by

North Koreans for use as everything

from back-packs to rain coats. These

North Koreans become walking billboards

of American aid and generosity

of spirit.

North Korea is just one critical challenge

in a region of enormous importance

to us. We cannot separate our

policy there from our overall approach

in East Asia.

We cannot hope that decisions we

make about national missile defense,

Taiwan policy, or support for democracy

and rule of law in China will be of

no consequence to developments on the

Korean Peninsula. To the contrary, we

need to think holistically and comprehensively

about East Asia policy.

Our interests are vast. Roughly onethird

of the world’s population resides

in East Asia. In my lifetime, East Asia

has gone from less than 3 percent of

the world GDP in 1950 to roughly 25

percent today.

Four of our 10 largest trading partners—

Japan, China, Taiwan, and South

Korea, are in East Asia.

Each of those trading partners is also

one of the world’s top ten economies as

measured by gross domestic product.

China, Japan, and South Korea together

hold more than $700 billion in

hard currency reserves—half of the

world’s total.

East Asia is a region of economic dynamism.

Last year Singapore, Hong

Kong, and South Korea grew by more

than 10 percent, shaking off the East

Asian financial crisis and resuming

their characteristic vitality. U.S. exports

to the region have grown dramatically

in recent years. U.S. exports

to Southeast Asia, for instance, surpass

our exports to Germany and are

double our exports to France. U.S. direct

investment in East Asia now tops

$150 billion, and has tripled over the

past decade.

And of course these are just a few of

the raw economic realities which underscore

East Asia’s importance. The

United States has important humanitarian,

environmental, energy, and security

interests throughout the region.

We have an obligation, it seems to

me, not to drop the ball. We have a

vital interest in maintaining peace and

stability in East Asia. We have good

friends and allies—like President Kim

Dae Jung of South Korea—who stand

ready to work with us toward that

goal. It is vital that we not drop the

ball; miss an opportunity to end North

Korea’s deadly and destabilizing pursuit

of long range missiles. I don’t

know that an agreement can be

reached. In the end North Korea may

prove too intransigent, too truculent,

for us to reach an accord.

But I hope the Bush administration

will listen closely to President Kim

today, and work with him to test North

Korea’s commitment to peace. We

should stay the course on an engagement

policy that has brought the peninsula

to the brink, not of war, but of

the dawning of a brave new day for all

the Korean people.

I yield the floor.