Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I’m deeply honored to appear before this committee today. I’m

here as somebody who has spent much of the last 40 years working

on the Asia Pacific region, much of that on the two Koreas, China,

and Japan.

I’m also here today as someone who’s been a long-time advocate

of diplomacy with North Korea, and through several United States

administrations during my career as a diplomat, I made the case

that diplomacy, dialogue and mutual respect are a lot more likely

to yield the results that America sought and to yield them at a

more acceptable cost than were policies based on confrontation, and

I base this judgment on years of studying North Korea and on hundreds

of hours over some 12 years of negotiating with North

Koreans.

And through this experience, I came to understand what motivates

the North Korean regime, its strengths and its weaknesses.

My advocacy of negotiations with Pyongyang has always been

based on two principles: The first is that North Korea’s possession

of nuclear weapons represents a direct threat to United States

national security interests; and the second is that eliminating this

threat requires a concerted diplomatic effort aimed at determining

whether North Korea was prepared to make a strategic decision to

give up its nuclear weapons ambitions in return for things that the

United States might be prepared to offer.

In the past, there were many times when American diplomats,

including me, had very serious reason to believe that such an

arrangement was possible and today, I am disturbed to report, this

may no longer be the case.

Today, there are disturbing signs that North Korea may finally

have made a strategic decision about its nuclear weapons and that

decision may be that Kim Jong-il intends to keep its nuclear weapons

and that the North will seek recognition by the United States

and the international community that it is now a nuclear weapons

state.

I’m drawn to this conclusion because of statements that North

Korean officials have made to me over the last year and to virtually

every American visitor to Pyongyang in recent months. It’s

also based on the DPRK’s public utterances and actions with

respect to its nuclear weapons capability.

I am delighted to have heard so many references to former Secretary

of Defense Perry’s comment with respect to dealing with

North Korea as it is. I accompanied Dr. Perry to Pyongyang on his

historic visit in 1999 and I could not agree with that assessment

more. Dealing with North Korea as it is, we are faced with the following

facts:

Just since the beginning of this year, North Korea has abrogated

the 1991 North-South Denuclearization Accords. It has ousted

IAEA inspectors from Yongbyon. It has walked out of the six-party

talks. It has begun to restart its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon. It

has conducted yet another nuclear test and it has done so in contravention

of its own formal commitment to denuclearize.

The Obama administration’s response to all of this has been

measured and calm but firm. Early on, President Obama appointed

Ambassador Bosworth, my distinguished colleague of the last 30

years, as his Special Representative, and for anyone who knows

Ambassador Bosworth and his reputation, that appointment clearly

signaled a United States intention to deal with Pyongyang at a

high level and in a positive and pragmatic way. And many Americans

who deal with North Korea, including me, were deeply

impressed by President Obama’s commitment to diplomacy and to

resetting relations with adversaries. As a result, we conveyed to

our North Korean interlocutors in the strongest possible terms in

recent months that the arrival of this new administration was a

historic opportunity to put the U.S.–DPRK relationship back on

track.

Unfortunately, North Korea has thus far rejected these overtures.

In my longer statement, which I respectfully request be

made a part of the formal record, I discuss what may be behind

Pyongyang’s actions and many of those points have been made earlier

in this hearing.

But to summarize, I think North Korea’s recent behavior may

have much more to do with its internal agenda than with its external

relations. Whatever the reason, Pyongyang’s actions do suggest

that North Korea is seeking to establish a troubling and unacceptable

new paradigm in relations.

So where do we go from here? I think many of the steps that the

administration has taken so far are right on the mark, including

closer consultations with allies, and the other steps mentioned by

Ambassador Bosworth. Taking all of those steps that have been

mentioned by Ambassador Bosworth will exert clear pressure on

North Korea, maximize solidarity with our allies and drive home

the message to the DPRK that the path it is on will lead only to

further isolation and suffering.

Let me also say that I would strongly recommend that the

United States keep the door open to people-to-people cultural and

other exchanges with North Korea. These are important ways of

exposing North Koreans to the truth and the truth is something

that we can employ at great advantage in bringing about future

change.

Let me wrap up my comments by just saying it is not too late

for North Korea to halt this free fall in relations with Washington

and its neighbors. Pyongyang can still choose to accept the outstretched

hand that has been offered to it. The United States is

prepared, as it should be, to build a better bilateral relationship

with Pyongyang based on mutual respect, nonhostility, and the

complete end of the North’s nuclear weapons program.

In fact, those very principles used to form the core of the DPRK’s

own negotiating position. I would strongly urge Pyongyang to

return to those principles.

Thank you.

Karl Marx, who was not right about much, managed to get one thing right when

he declared that things occur twice in history, the first time as tragedy, the second

time as farce. Both tragedy and farce have characterized America’s troubled relationship

with the DPRK over the years. Today, there are signs that a new tragedy

in this relationship may be in offing, this time of Pyongyang’s making.

In 1999, the DPRK left the four-party talks involving the two Koreas, China, and

the United States, preferring instead to focus on bilateral dialogue with the United

States. Pyongyang also slowed the pace and the productivity of U.S.–DPRK talks

that had grown out of Presidential Special Envoy William Perry’s historic effort to

improve relations between the United States and North Korea.

Both these moves severely reduced the chance that the United States and North

Korea would be able to fulfill the potential of the U.S.–DPRK dialogue before the

Clinton administration came to a close. The North Koreans were told as much by

American officials, including me, at the time.

After a long hiatus in senior-level bilateral talks, the North Koreans reengaged

with the United States in October 2000 in a dramatic fashion. A senior officer of

the Korean People’s Army and First Vice Chairman of the DPRK’s ruling National

Defense Commission, Marshal Cho Myong Rok, came to Washington and met with

President Clinton and his National Security team. In those talks, Cho and his

American interlocutors made remarkable progress, reaching understandings on antiterrorism

cooperation and other issues and laying out the basis for a fundamental

redefinition of the United States-North Korea relationship.

This visit was followed less than 2 weeks later by Secretary of State Madeleine

K. Albright’s historic meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang,

where the two conducted far-reaching discussion on the nuclear and missile issues

that were at the heart of the United States concerns vis-a-vis North Korea.

Following that meeting, however, an inconclusive and disappointing set of U.S.–

DPRK negotiations on missiles in Kuala Lumpur in November 2000 quickly sapped

the momentum of the dialogue process. North Korean representatives insisted that

only a visit by President Clinton to Pyongyang could resolve the missile issue. That

idea was met with skepticism by many U.S. officials, including me, who were unwilling

to risk such a visit out of concern that President Clinton could return from

Pyongyang empty handed.

As a result, the intense U.S.–DPRK engagement of late-2000 ground to a halt. As

many on the U.S. side had feared almost a year earlier, the Clinton administration

ran out of time to pursue further diplomacy with Pyongyang, and the press of other

priorities, including the Middle East, compelled the President’s attention elsewhere.

Seen in retrospect, North Korea’s decision to reengage so late in the Clinton

administration was a major miscalculation. It meant that a process which had generated considerable hope and optimism would fall short. It also required the Clinton

administration to pass the baton on this issue to the next administration—a step

that had tragic (or, some would say, farcical) results.

The story of U.S.–DPRK relations under the 8 years of the Bush administration

is a familiar one and need not be repeated here. It was a period marked by mutual

hostility and suspicion, broken agreements, lost opportunity, empty threats, miscalculation,

and misperception.

What little trust that had been built between Pyongyang and Washington quickly

dissipated with the discovery that North Korea was secretly developing an alternative

path to nuclear weapons development through uranium enrichment.

Pyongyang’s perceived perfidy opened the way for Bush administration figures to

dismantle key agreements reached during the Clinton administration. One prime

target was the 1994 Agreed Framework, which had successfully capped and frozen

the North’s known nuclear weapons program, but which was deeply opposed by

some critics.

On top of this, a belief by some senior Bush administration officials that the

United States should not negotiate with ‘‘evil’’ virtually guaranteed that any serious

effort to use diplomacy to resolve differences with Pyongyang would be dead on

arrival.

The predictable result of this policy approach was to open the door to North

Korea’s resumption of its nuclear weapons development and missile programs (it is

often forgotten that, among the agreements abandoned by the Bush administration,

was the one that had prevented the North from launching medium- and long-range

ballistic missiles for 7 years between 1999 and 2006).

The eventual, tragic outcome of this approach was the October 2006 nuclear test

which, as a North Korean official told me last year, ‘‘changed everything’’ in terms

of how the DPRK viewed itself and its relations with the United States, and made

it almost certain that the North would never agree to give up its nuclear weapons.

Seen in retrospect, it is one of the ironies of history that a group of determined

‘‘true believers’’ who helped shape and promote the early Bush administration’s

North Korea policy effectively served as the handmaidens of Kim Jong-il’s nuclear

weapons program.

The waning years of the Bush Presidency saw the administration adopt a radically

different approach to dealing with Pyongyang, both out of necessity and a

search for legacy. Aware that its policy on North Korea had produced only one substantial

outcome—the creation of a new nuclear weapons state in Asia—the administration

reversed course. And having little to show for its tenure other than years

of unilateralist, confrontational, and divisive foreign policy, the administration tried

a radically different approach on North Korea to score at least one ‘‘win.’’

The Bush administration’s 180-degree shift on North Korea left heads spinning

and allies (particularly Japan, but South Korea, as well) dismayed and feeling betrayed.

The Bush administration adopted a secretive, compartmentalized approach

to diplomacy and policy formulation that kept allies, partners, and elements of the

U.S. bureaucracy in the dark about the U.S. game plan.

Ironically, this approach drew on the playbook developed in the first 4 years of

the administration, when Secretary of State Powell and other moderates found

themselves undermined and outflanked thanks to the work of what one former Bush

administration official called a ‘‘secret cabal’’ operating a parallel foreign policy.

The opaque machinations of the late-Bush administration’s North Korea policy

even puzzled one senior North Korean diplomat, who used a meeting with visiting

Americans in early 2008 to convey his own incredulity about the quiet assurances

he was receiving from the United States.

During this period, an administration that had once declined even to meet with

the ‘‘evil’’ DPRK began to make major concessions to it. It opted to put off until the

future the serious task of getting to the bottom of North Korea’s proliferation of

nuclear technology to Syria and its uranium enrichment efforts. Such was the extent

of the administration’s policy turnabout that it left even moderates and

proengagement advocates worried.

In the end, this approach produced a fragile freeze on the North’s nuclear reactor

at Yongbyon, the (readily reversible) destruction of the reactor’s cooling tower, and

a shaky verbal understanding on verification that began to unravel quickly as the

Bush administration drew to a close.

This was the situation that the new American President inherited in January

2009. Despite this flawed legacy, President Obama, who has a natural instinct for

smart diplomacy and for putting the pressure on the other side to make the mistake

of rejecting outreach, deserves credit for managing the North Korea issue well.

Pyongyang, on the other hand, has played things terribly. Miscalculation,

misperception, and internal politics appear to be driving the DPRK’s policy in a dangerous

and self-destructive direction.

The Obama administration’s rhetoric on North Korea has been generally measured,

careful, and calm, with none of the empty threats and posturing that used to

characterize United States statements on North Korea.

The Obama administration reached out, both publicly and privately, to Pyongyang

and clearly conveyed the United States intent to use both multilateral and bilateral

diplomacy to address the nuclear and other core issues. President Obama appointed

Ambassador Stephen W. Bosworth as his special representative to deal with North

Korea—a step that signaled the United States intention to deal with Pyongyang at

a high level and in a pragmatic way.

The fact that Ambassador Bosworth is one of the few American officials ever to

have negotiated successfully with North Korea and to have concluded agreements

that actually worked should have been seen by the North Koreans as evidence of

United States willingness to deal positively and constructively with them.

During the Presidential campaign, throughout the transition, in his inaugural

speech, and subsequently, President Obama has signaled an approach and direction

to diplomacy with adversaries markedly different from his predecessor. At some

political risk, he has reached out to Iran, Cuba, and to Venezuela.

Listening to the President’s rhetoric and observing his follow through, there is no

doubt in this observer’s mind that the Obama administration was prepared to deal

with Pyongyang in the same way, and the diplomatic signals reflecting this were

all blinking green. Based on this, I and many other Americans conveyed to our

North Korean interlocutors in the clearest possible terms our sense that the arrival

of the Obama administration presented a historic opportunity to put the U.S.–DPRK

relationship on the right track.

Regrettably, North Korea seems to have a different agenda for the bilateral relationship.

Its actions and response thus far suggest that it is not interested in the

diplomacy of reconciliation and cooperation that President Obama seeks to pursue.

The DPRK has responded to the Obama administration with an escalation of its

rhetoric, including threats of war. Pyongyang has told visiting Americans that the

DPRK should now be acknowledged as a nuclear weapons state and that even normalized

relations with the United States will not change its nuclear status.

The North Koreans have said to American interlocutors that the only price it

might consider acceptable in return for the elimination of its nuclear weapons program

would be the dissolution of the U.S.–ROK security alliance, the removal of

United States troops from the Korean Peninsula, and the withdrawal of the United

States ‘‘nuclear umbrella’’ from our Korean and Japanese allies.

A senior Bush administration official was once quoted as saying that, as an

empire, America was able to ‘‘create its own reality.’’ In making some of its recent

demands, North Korea appears to be suffering from the same delusions.

As if to confirm its intransigence in even more egregious ways, the DPRK welcomed

the inauguration of the Obama administration and the outstretched hand

mentioned in President Obama’s inaugural address with an announcement of its

preparations for a ‘‘satellite launch.’’ The DPRK delivered on its threat and conducted

a launch, despite clear warnings from the PRC, the United States, and other

members of the international community.

The DPRK walked out of the six-party talks and threatened the ROK with war

if Seoul joined the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). Pyongyang called for the

United Nations to apologize for the Security Council President’s statement issued

after the missile test, and threatened to conduct additional nuclear tests, launch

more missiles, and begin a uranium enrichment program if there was no apology.

North Korea has now carried out a nuclear weapons test, making good on its promise

to do so.

The reasons behind Pyongyang’s new belligerence remain unclear. There are signs

that the DPRK’s behavior may have a lot more to do with its complicated internal

politics than with its international agenda. But whatever the cause, the DPRK has

adopted a disturbingly hard-line approach toward the United States and others and

has embarked on a course of escalating rhetoric and intensified hostility.

On the core issue of whether it will ever give up its nuclear weapons, the DPRK’s

rhetoric suggests it has finally made a ‘‘strategic decision’’ regarding its nuclear program.

Regrettably, that decision appears to be that it will keep its nuclear weapons

and seek to have the United States and the international community recognize it

as a nuclear weapons state. If that is indeed Pyongyang’s goal, it raises an important

question about what the purpose of renewed multilateral or bilateral talks

would be if they are not aimed at eliminating the DPRK’s nuclear weapons.

Meanwhile, the DPRK has announced it is resuming operations at the Yongbyon

reactor and nuclear weapons facility. It has ousted IAEA inspectors and American

technicians from Yongbyon. This follows North Korean statements to an American

visitor earlier this year that the DPRK had ‘‘weaponized’’ all of its existing plutonium.

Faced with this grim situation, the camp of ‘‘optimists’’ in the United States, particularly

those who still believe that the DPRK will ever give up its nuclear weapons

at the bargaining table, has seen its ranks depleted.

The North’s actions and rhetoric have alienated many United States-based Korea

hands who had dedicated themselves to the cause of deeper and more comprehensive

engagement with Pyongyang. North Korea has always found it easy to anger

its enemies. Tragically, it is now perfecting the technique of alienating many of

those who aspired to be its friends.

Even in China, one can now hear voices saying that North Korea is increasingly

seen as being a net liability for China. Yet the PRC remains hamstrung by its aversion

to applying too much pressure on the North, lest it induce collapse.

As suggested earlier, Washington has responded to the DPRK with calm and with

a determination not to be provoked. It would seem that the days when bombast and

brinksmanship could bring the United States and its allies scurrying to the negotiating

table may be over.

Washington has also made it clear to Pyongyang that the door to multilateral and

bilateral negotiations remains open if the North wishes to walk through it. That is

smart; it will serve to underscore that it is Pyongyang, alone among the six parties,

which is rejecting dialogue.

At the same time, the United States has intensified bilateral and trilateral consultation

and coordination with its Japanese and South Korean allies; reassured

them of United States commitments to their security; and obtained unanimous

approval of a UNSC President’s statement that reaffirmed sanctions on the North

and declared Pyongyang’s missile launch a contravention of UNSC Resolution 1718.

Pyongyang’s missile launch has stimulated even stronger interest in missile defense

in Japan. Even South Koreans are beginning to talk about the need to build

their own such defenses. The North’s recent nuclear test has given rise to a debate

in the Japanese and Korean media about pursuing the ‘‘nuclear option’’ in those

countries.

These developments have caught Beijing’s attention. The PRC cannot be pleased

that its North Korean neighbor and ‘‘ally’’ is compelling other countries in the region

to reassess their defense options and take steps that could eventually undermine

the effectiveness of China’s strategic missile forces.

So where are we now?

The next move is Pyongyang’s. If the North’s recent rhetoric is any guide (and

it should be), we are in for a very difficult period. Military incidents, more missile

launches, and even another nuclear weapons test cannot be ruled out, especially

since Pyongyang has ruled them all in. Whatever happens, the patience and solidarity

of the United States and its allies and partners will be tested in the months

ahead.

All of this could be avoided if Pyongyang were to choose another path. However,

there are worrisome signs that, for domestic political reasons, Pyongyang either cannot

or will not do so.

Regrettably, the DPRK has clearly misread the Obama administration, mistaking

a sincere offer of a new relationship and a comprehensive dialogue as a sign of

weakness. Instead of agreeing to work with a new American President clearly committed

to a refreshing, new approach to international diplomacy, they have sought

to test him.

Pyongyang is probably surprised that the Obama administration has not risen to

the bait of the North’s provocative behavior. North Korea’s leader also cannot be

pleased that the DPRK’s rhetoric and actions have not only failed to divide the

United States from its allies, but on the contrary have helped the United States,

South Korea, and Japan work more closely together than they have in 8 years. And

the unanimous support in the U.N. Security Council for the recent President’s statement

probably cannot be sitting well in Pyongyang.

Despite the dark place it finds itself in, there is still time for North Korea to repair

the damage. Perhaps the DPRK’s leader can begin to extricate his country from

the box it is in by questioning the advice he is getting.

One question he might ask his subordinates is: Why did you have me pursue policies

which have angered the Obama administration, made the DPRK look like a

international pariah, united America and its Asian allies as never before, driven

food aid workers and their assistance out of the country, prompted China to support

a UNSC statement, shaken the PRC–DPRK alliance relationship, and made Cuba,

Venezuela, and even Iran look more reasonable in the eyes of the world than the

DPRK?

The North can still choose to respond positively to the conciliatory diplomacy of

the Obama administration. Inviting President Obama’s Special Representative for

North Korea Policy to Pyongyang would be a good start. Perhaps the North’s leader

might also consider dispatching a high-level representative to Washington to shake

President Obama’s outstretched hand. Such a bold step has the potential to yield

a better future for North Korea than will slapping that hand away. It will also help

us avoid another tragic turn in U.S.–DPRK relations.

Over the years, in discussions with fairly senior

DPRK officials, we have repeatedly had opportunities to discuss the

welfare of their people and America’s desire to help. It has been my

experience over the years that at least the people we were dealing

with were genuinely concerned about the welfare of their people.

Many of the negotiations that I participated in in the past

focused on the issue of food and humanitarian assistance and new

projects designed at helping the North Korean people and I would

say I have never encountered a DPRK official who brushed aside

the needs of their people.

The people that we were dealing with, the officials that we were

dealing with, took this very seriously, so seriously that hours and

hours and hours of negotiations were devoted to this topic of how

can we best improve the lives of their people.

Senator, I’ve been talking with the Chinese since

the late 1970s about North Korea and I find today a remarkable

difference in the tone and content of our dialogue with the Chinese,

in my conversations with the Chinese, from those days.

I find more and more that Chinese officials, and particularly senior

think tank representatives and former officials with whom I’ve

had long relationships, are looking at North Korea in a very different

way today.

I’ve had a couple of Chinese officials actually use the term ‘‘security

liability’’ in describing North Korea today. That’s a remarkable

thing for even semiofficial Chinese to say.

The bottom line is that I think attitudes in Beijing are changing.

We’re starting to see op-eds conveying a more nuanced view. We’re

starting to see publications come out very clearly questioning past

policy with respect to the DPRK.

I think we are at an important turning point in terms of Chinese

attitudes toward North Korea. I don’t want to overstate this, but

I think we are at a turning point.

One final point on Japan. Japan has been very much focused on

one issue in recent years: the abduction issue. A serious and emotional

and important issue, yes, but I think Japan has focused to

such a degree on that issue, that it has failed to focus as much attention

as it should on other very immediate and important threats

to Japan, such as the North Korean missiles.

When the United States started to move away from fulfilling our

part of the bargain on the missile moratorium that prevented

North Korea from launching medium- and long-range ballistic missiles

for the better part of 7 years, we did not hear great cries of

opposition and anger from Tokyo that I had expected we would

hear. That was very unfortunate, and one of the things that I hope

we do when we get back to the table with the DPRK, and I believe

we will eventually get back to the table with the DPRK, is put the

missile issue back on the agenda.