Thank you, Mr. Chairman and other members of the

committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be back here again before

you to talk about the loose nukes crisis in North Korea. Last

time I was here, which was in early February, I described why this

really is a crisis, what the stakes were for the United States in this

situation, and some recollections about previous crises, in 1994 and

1998. This time you have asked me to analyze the prospect for

talks with North Korea at this point, and I am happy to do so. But

I thought first we ought to ask ourselves: Why talk to North Korea

at all?

When he appeared with me before this committee on February

4, Deputy Secretary of State Armitage indicated that the U.S. Government

intends to conduct direct talks with North Korea. And this

is the right decision for the Bush administration. But it is worth

pausing to ask why. After all, North Korea has a record of honoring

its agreements with us that is, to put it charitably, mixed.

While North Korea kept the plutonium-containing fuel rods at

Yongbyon under international inspections and its research reactor

frozen for 8 years, ending this freeze only a few months ago, we

also now know that it was cheating on other provisions of its international

agreements by enriching uranium. And so this means

that, at a minimum, any understanding in the future with North

Korea will have to be very rigorously verified.

And in addition, the government of North Korea is very far, and

both the chairman and Senator Biden made this point, once again

to put it charitably, from sharing our values. Still, one is led to

talks, to the idea of talks with North Korea, by reasoning through

the full range of alternatives and from seeing the relationship

among them.

One alternative is to let North Korea go nuclear, but to isolate,

to contain, and to await the collapse of the North Korean regime.

President Bush said in his State of the Union Message that, ‘‘Nuclear

weapons will only bring isolation to North Korea.’’ But isolation

must seem like pretty light punishment to the most isolated

country on Earth.

Those who speak of containment envision a hermetic seal around

North Korea, embargoing imports and interdicting shipments of exports,

especially ballistic missiles. But the export we should worry

most about is plutonium. After North Korea gets five or six bombs

from the fuel rods at Yongbyon, it might reckon that it has enough

to sell a few and still have enough left over for itself, to sell to

other rogues or to terrorists.

And it is entirely implausible, and I can say this as a technical

matter, entirely implausible that we could effectively prevent a few

baseball-sized lumps of Plutonium–239 from being smuggled out of

Yongbyon and then out of North Korea. So containment in that

sense, which is the most important sense of containment as regards

North Korea, is technically unrealistic.

Not only is a nuclear weapons-sized quantity of Plutonium–239,

as I said, small in size, this is material that is not highly radioactive,

it does not emit an easily detected, strong signature that

could be used to detect it if it were smuggled out of North Korea

to a destination where terrorists could receive it.

The problem with awaiting the collapse of North Korea’s regime

is that there is no particular reason to believe it will occur soon.

And in the meantime, between now and the time when it might

collapse, North Korea can create lasting damage to our security

and to international security, damage that will extend beyond the

Korean Peninsula and well beyond the lifetime of the North Korean

regime. The half-life of Plutonium–239 is 24,400 years. I do not

how long the North Korean regime is going to last, but it is not

going to last that long. So in the period while we are waiting for

it to collapse, it can damage our security.

In my last appearance before the committee, I cited the five reasons

why letting North Korea go to serial production of nuclear

weapons is really a disaster for U.S. security. And let me just remind

you of those five reasons, any one of which would be a disaster.

First, and both the chairman and Senator Biden said this already,

North Korea might sell the plutonium that it judges to be

surplus to its own needs to States or terrorist groups. That is a

pretty riveting prospect, because while hijacked airlines and anthrax-

containing letters and so forth are a dangerous threat to civilized

society, it would change the way we are forced to live if it

were actually a realistic prospect that at any moment a great city,

American or other, could disappear in a mushroom cloud. That is

not a prospect we regard as realistic today because we believe all

the metal from which one can make nuclear weapons is in the custody

of a government somewhere that is responsible in its custodianship.

But it would change the way we were forced to live if we

believed that there were truly loose nukes.

Second, in a collapse scenario, you do not know into whose hands

the material the North Korean regime makes while it persists will

fall when the regime does collapse.

Third, even if the bombs remain firmly in the hands of the North

Korean regime, their possession of nuclear weapons might lead the

North Koreans to miscalculate that they had somehow tipped the

balance of deterrence on the Korean Peninsula, deterrence which

is now very strong. And that could, in turn, make war on the Korean

Peninsula more likely. That is a third reason.

Fourth reason, if North Korea goes nuclear, then all of its neighbors

need to ask themselves whether the choice they have made

not to have nuclear weapons, is a safe and self-respecting choice for

them. And that means Japan; it means South Korea, of course; it

means Taiwan, and possibly others.

And fifth, the domino effect could go worldwide. If the world’s

strangest, Stalinist throwback, impoverished, isolated country goes

nuclear, and everybody sits back and just watches, what does that

mean for the nonproliferation regime worldwide?

So those are five reasons, any one of which is pretty attentiongetting.

It appears from reading the press that the path of letting North

Korea go nuclear, coupled with isolation, containment, and awaiting

collapse, is, as a practical matter, the path we are on. And this

is the worst path, the worst alternative of all.

A second alternative is to use military force to arrest North Korea’s

race to nuclear weapons. I described last time I was here the

strike plan on Yongbyon that was devised in 1994, the last time

North Korea was moving toward reprocessing at Yongbyon. A

strike with conventionally armed precision weapons at Yongbyon’s

fuel rods and reprocessing facility would not eliminate North Korea’s

nuclear program, but it would set it back for years. And I do

not think there is any doubt that that strike is technically feasible.

If we were to strike Yongbyon, North Korea would have a choice.

It could respond by lashing out at South Korea through an invasion

across the DMZ, but that would precipitate a war that would surely

lead to the end of the North Korean regime. There is no guaranteeing

that the North would not make such a foolish choice, but

that is the risk we must run in this option. It is a risk worth taking

to avoid the disaster associated with the first alternative of letting

North Korea go nuclear.

As a practical matter, we are in a much better position to threaten

or conduct such a strike if we have previously made an effort

to talk North Korea out of its nuclear programs. Even if you are

a pessimist about the success of talks, they are a prerequisite for

exercising this second alternative.

A third alternative is to try to talk North Korea out of its nuclear

ambitions. And as was mentioned previously, I share the assessment

that—a year ago I would have assessed that it was likely we

could reach an agreement on terms acceptable to us to stop North

Korea from going nuclear in a verifiable way. Since then we have

let our options narrow. And now I fear that North Korea might

have concluded that it could dash across the nuclear finish line into

a zone where it is invulnerable to American attempts to force regime

change, since it suspects that is our objective.

We must, therefore, view talks as an experiment. If the experiment

succeeds, we will have stopped North Korea’s nuclear program

without war. If it does not, it was in any event the necessary

step toward making the alternative of military force realistic.

How should talks be conducted? I will just say a few words about

that. The two negotiators to either side of me have much more experience

in those matters than I. It is clear that we cannot conduct

direct talks with North Korea while it is advancing its nuclear programs.

So we must, therefore, insist that during talks North Korea

reinstate the freeze at Yongbyon. And in return, we can refrain

from taking any steps toward military action during the period of

talks.

Secretary Armitage indicated the United States would participate

in direct talks, meaning that Americans and North Koreans

would be in the same room. This is necessary. We cannot outsource

our deepest security matters to China, Russia, or the United Nations.

And only the United States can convincingly tell North Korea

that it will be less safe, not more safe, if it proceeds with nuclear

weapons. This is the crux of the matter. That is the reason why

we have to be in the room.

Now, that said, others can be in the room at the same time, and

there can be more than one room, and having others in the room

with us might be advantageous. Certainly, we will have a richer set

of sticks and carrots if our negotiating strategy is closely coordinated

with our allies, Japan and South Korea. And coordination is

necessary in any event with those two parties, our allies there, in

order to maintain the critical alliance relationships that have an

importance, and goes well beyond North Korea. They buttress our

entire strategy in the region.

In the past we have conducted parallel bilateral talks. That is

U.S./North Korean, South Korean/North Korean, and Japanese/

North Korean, all in parallel-coordinated fashion, rather than

meeting in one room. But when we have done this, we have been

careful to coordinate the three tracks.

China and Russia have also strongly supported the proposition

that North Korea must not go nuclear. But their influence, and this

was mentioned earlier by Senator Biden, is not apparent yet, at

least to me. They might be willing to play a more effective role once

we have set out a strategy into which they can play a part.

The United Nations can also play a critical role, particularly if

North Korea were to agree to IAEA inspectors returning. We

should continue to proceed at the United Nations, but as a complement,

not a substitute, for direct talks.

What should our position be in these direct talks? We should

enter the talks with a clear sense of our objectives. At the top of

the list, above all other objectives we might have with North Korea,

should be the complete and verifiable elimination of North Korea’s

nuclear weapons programs, both plutonium-based and uraniumbased,

and its long-range missile programs. This objective includes,

but goes beyond, the obligations contained in previous agreements

made by North Korea, well beyond.

The United States should also make it clear to North Korea that

it cannot tolerate North Korean progression to reprocessing or any

other steps to obtain fissile material for nuclear weapons, and that

we are prepared to take all measures of coercion, including military

force, to prevent this threat to U.S. security.

In return, there are two things that it should be easy for the

United States to offer. First, we should be prepared to make a

pledge to North Korea that the United States will not seek to eliminate

the North Korean regime by force if North Korea agrees to the

complete and verifiable elimination of its nuclear weapons and

long-range missile programs.

Absent a realistic plan or timetable for regime change—and that

is a matter I discussed when I was here previously. That was a

matter that we looked at very carefully in the North Korea policy

review, led by former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry in the 1999/

2000 period. Absent a realistic plan or timetable for regime change,

we must deal with North Korea as it is, rather than as we might

wish it were. Turning that reality, unless somebody can give me a

plan I have not seen, into a pledge should not be difficult.

Second, we should be prepared to offer assistance for weapons

elimination as the U.S. has done in a very different context to the

States of the former Soviet Union under the famous Nunn-Lugar

program.

Over time, if the talks are bearing fruit, we can broaden them

to encompass other issues of deep concern to the United States,

such as conventional forces, avoidance of provocations and incidents,

and human rights; and other issues of interest to North

Korea, such as energy security and economic development. We

should also offer a longer-term vision of gradual and conditional relaxation

of tension, including the possibility of enhanced economic

contacts with the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

In this approach, the U.S. diplomatic position should be a component

of a common overall position shared with our allies, in which

we pool our diplomatic tools: sticks and carrots. In a shared strategy,

we will also need to pool our objectives, so that we are seeking

a set of outcomes that South Korea and Japan also share.

If an agreement emerges from direct talks, it will supersede and

replace the 1994 Agreed Framework, which has been controversial

in the United States and, it appears, not even entirely to the liking

of the North Korean leadership. As in 1994, the agreement must,

of course, include the freezing and progressive dismantlement of

the plutonium program, but we now know it has to also include

verifiable provisions for eliminating the uranium enrichment program,

and to the Agreed Framework’s emphasis on nuclear weapons

must be added verifiable elimination of North Korea’s ballistic

missile program.

In return, the United States and its allies must make it convincing

to North Korea, and this is the crux of the matter, that

foreswearing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is its best

course, the only safe course for it.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, as I stressed earlier,

I am by no means certain that a diplomatic approach including direct

talks will succeed, but it is a necessary prelude to any military

action, and it is far preferable to just standing back and watching

the disaster of North Korea going nuclear. Thank you.

Absolutely. It is an excellent question, and it is important

for us all to go in with our eyes open. Our interests are not

identical to those of South Korea, Japan, China, Russia. There is

no question about that. But you use the word ‘‘divergent.’’ I think

they are far from divergent. They are not identical, but they overlap

very strongly.

Let us take South Korea and the United States. The South Koreans

have never been as exercised about a nuclear North Korea as

we have been. They reckon they are in trouble anyway, if a war

starts on the Korean Peninsula. The intensity of violence is so

great that adding nuclear weapons to that does not materially

change the calculus for them, and they do not have the same global

perspective that we do on proliferation. So, yes, there is a little bit

of difference there.

At the same time, we do have two very deep common interests.

The first is that deterrence not be upset on the Korean Peninsula,

and nuclear weapons could do that. That could make a war that

would destroy much of South Korea more likely, and the South Koreans

need to understand that they do have something at stake

here in a nuclear North Korea.

And second, they have a stake in North Korea not collapsing precipitously

and on some progressive process of warming of relations

between North and South. And that is not going to be possible if

North Korea goes nuclear and then forces the rest of the world to

isolate it. So their interests do, actually, overlap with ours, simultaneously.

I do not know whether the new President has entirely thought

this through. Sometimes we speak as though we don’t understand

that our interests, while not identical, do overlap. But the reality

is they overlap strongly. That is the basis for the common interest,

and that is why I do not think divergence is in the cards.

You could say similar things about China. I do not want to take

any more time. But you do have to walk around the table, at this

hypothetical table where others sit as well, and say: What does the

situation look like from their point of view? But, I believe, that

from the point of view of everybody sitting at that table, a nuclear

North Korea is bad medicine, and that is a common interest, but

it is not the only common interest we have, and we cannot just pursue

what we want. If you are in a common diplomatic strategy, you

have to want a little bit what everybody else wants; if you want

them to want a little bit of what you want.

The North Korean military is told all the time that

we are going to attack them. North Korea is in the third generation

of Stalinist political indoctrination, and so you cannot rule out the

thought that even though it would be clearly self-destructive that

if the order were given for North Korean forces to pour over the

DMZ, they would do so. It is also possible that any military action

by us would lead, through the unraveling of move/countermove and

miscalculation/counter-miscalculation, to a conflict which North

Korea did not initially intend to be a full-scale war, but could end

up as full-scale war. So there is no question that if one contemplates

a strike of the kind that we described that that could be

the consequence.

At the same time, I think the North Koreans also have to look

at this situation and ask themselves whether at that point they

would have the choice whether to lash out to the South, at their

South Korean brethren, and to initiate a war which we are absolutely

confident would be over within a few weeks and would lead

to the destruction of the North Korean regime. It would be helpful

also if at that time China indicated to North Korea that it was not

prepared to come to its assistance, if through its nuclear ambitions,

North Korea had precipitated such a strike.

So we should try to contrive a situation that leads to the result

we want, namely setting back the nuclear program without leading

to that larger war. But I think we would be foolish not to think

that there was a reasonable possibility that that larger war would

eventuate, and that is what makes it so risky.

I do not have any particular insight or visibility into

the administration. My impression is that they are—that our administration

is wrestling with the problem and trying to put together

a strategy that answers all these questions: Why talk to

North Korea in the first place? What kind of agreement are we

after? What is the modality for talks?

It is unfortunate that we are short of time to come up with a

strategy of that kind. That is because the North Koreans are trying

to drive the train as rapidly as they can, but this is a hard problem.

It is a multi-body problem, as we say in physics. It is not just

us. It is not even just us and the North Koreans. There are others

involved.

And one thing that I think both of these negotiators have emphasized

is the effect that getting talks started would have of slowing

the pace of events down. That is very important. And if we can arrive

at some modality for beginning talks, and the condition on

both sides for the talks is that we slow the ball down and in particular

that they slow the ball down at Yongbyon, then we have a

little bit more time to figure all of this out. So we do not have to

have figured everything out before we embark. And I think that is

important. The pace of events, the momentum as Arnie called it,

is pretty fearsome here.

Senator Brownback.

I was not actually going to address the refugees

issue. Maybe someone who knows more about that can.

I would like to address or just second what you said about the

nature of the North Korean regime. The last time I appeared before

this committee, we were not just talking about the nuclear issue,

but the larger question of North Korea’s destiny and future.

I was explaining that in 1998 when I was first given the task of

looking at North Korea in the large, the so-called Perry process,

run by former Secretary of Defense Bill Perry, we came to basically

the same assessment you did of the North Korean regime. The evidence,

the kind you have adduced, is abundant. It is a remarkable

situation. This is a third generation of Stalinism which we have not

seen anywhere else in the world.

We looked at a couple of possibilities that are still possibilities

to the United States. One is to try to undermine the North Korean

regime, and we looked quite hard at that. And in the end, we set

that aside for two reasons. The first was that we could not come

up with any realistic plan or prospect for accomplishing that. It is

not like Afghanistan where you sort of throw in an ingredient of

disorder and you can expect an uprising. We could not produce

Presidential quality information that a strategy of undermining

was likely to succeed any time soon.

You are talking about as a whole——

I understand the refugee situation. I am talking

about——

No, I was not suggesting that you were suggesting

the strategy of undermining. I am trying to respond to the general

question about the North Korean regime, how long can it last.

And one possibility is to try to hasten what human nature and

history suggests will happen eventually in North Korea. And we

looked at that and I would be happy to talk to you further about

our analysis of that, but in the end, we could not figure out any

way to do that quickly and the nuclear issue was pressing. The nuclear

issue was on a time scale of months, where the larger question

of North Korea’s destiny was on a time scale of years, maybe

even decades.

The same thing can be said of reform. Many people have suggested

that North Korea follow the path of reform, Deng Xiaopingstyle

reform. One would like to see it do that also. North Korea certainly

does not show any inclination to do that. But in any event,

that is a long-term project and we have a short-term emergency

with the nuclear problem, and that is the one that we have been

addressing here.

But what you say about the nature of the North Korean regime

and the question of its long-term future, I could not agree with

more.

Only to say that I think there is plenty of room for

doubt about what North Korea is up to. It is a mysterious place.

The spirit in which I would enter into talks with them is the spirit

in which I think we all use the word ‘‘experiment.’’

This is worth a try. You cannot be sure where it will

lead. I do not know how the North Koreans will respond. I do not

know whether they are prepared to agree with us or they can make

an agreement with us of the kind we require; for example,

verification.

They do not know what they are in for in the way

of verification in a certain sense. Having the record they do, we are

not going to settle for anything less than a very rigorous

verification scheme. And that will be something very difficult for an

insular, paranoid kind of political system to deal with.

So I think we have to look at this as an experiment. And from

that point of view, I think everybody who has different views and

different takes on North Korea is entitled to their different views

and different takes. Right now, let us go forward and learn by

doing. I do not know what factions there are or what different

points of view there are. I just know that this is a hard enough

question that there is plenty of room for different points——

Of view, and I think we ought to get

together in the spirit of learning by doing and conducting this experiment.

The North Koreans are trying to use time to narrow

our options and they are succeeding at that at the moment, and we

need to reverse that narrowing of options.

I would certainly subscribe to that.

It is not acceptable in my opinion. I tried to explain

in my statement why a nuclear North Korea is a disaster for our

security in a number of ways.

So I do not think that is something that we ought

to be prepared to acquiesce in or that we need to acquiesce in.

May I add just one other thing?

Quite apart from anything we have said, the North

Koreans have believed for a long time that we are out to get them

in some way, and I do not think—that is an article of faith with

North Korea, a concern they have had for many, many years, and

certainly predates anything that has been said in the last 2 years.

The only reason I chime in at this point is: This is the crux of

the matter as far as the North Koreans are concerned. They would

like to continue to run this rather odd and objectionable, as Senator

Brownback correctly indicated, regime.

We would, of course, like for the North Koreans to have a better

government, but we are not prepared to run the risks that it would

take actually to deliver that to them. And in the meantime, while

this regime continues to exist, we need to protect our security from

it and that means making sure it does not take steps that will endanger

our security long after it is gone. And that is one of the key

points that I think all of us talked about in negotiating this strategy

with North Korea.

One has to say: ‘‘Your security as you see it, which is your survival

and your prospects for bettering your lot, the lot of your people,

those prospects are much brighter if you do not go nuclear. You

think that nuclear weapons are somehow your salvation, but just

the opposite is true.’’ That is the essence of the case that needs to

be made to them.

Secretary Rumsfeld has indicated we can. That was

the strategy, the bedrock of the military strategy of the United

States from 1989 when the Wall came down until right now, for the

very good reason—and I remember because I used to testify on the

Defense budget and people would say, ‘‘You have got to be kidding.

You have got to buy enough stuff for two wars at the same time.

What are the odds that two wars are going to take place at the

same time?’’ And the answer always was, ‘‘Well, if one opponent

knew that we would be all tied up with the first war that got started,

that would create the opportunity for the second war.’’ And that

is why we had a war machine that could simultaneously do the two

major regional contingencies.

And what we are seeing now in the behavior of North Korea,

which is trying to take advantage of the fact that we are busy in

the Middle East, is evidence that we were right, that two different

things are likely to take place simultaneously. But Secretary

Rumsfeld says, and I certainly believe it is true, that we could

carry out the joint plan with South Korea for the defense of South

Korea against North Korea today even as we are doing things in

Iraq. I certainly hope the North Koreans understand that.

If I may, it certainly illustrates two things. The first

is that the North Koreans are the experts at not being on the back

burner. The one thing they are good at is that. So they cannot be

counted on to slow the momentum down, to limit, modulate, moderate,

their behavior. We have to provide that moderation, modulation,

slowing of momentum. They will not do it. There is the other

thing that it reminds me of, which is just how dangerous the Korean

Peninsula is and how quickly things could get out of control.

We talked earlier about the possibility of the military option and

possible retaliation by North Korea. Well, in addition to a deliberate

action, in a regime like that and with a situation like that,

there are all kinds of possibility for unintended consequences.

So as the momentum picks up and people begin taking steps

against one another, this is a regime that looks through the world

with a very thick lens, and the possibility of accident and miscalculation

is very large. And that leads to a third thing, which is

since they are where they are, we have to be very clear about

where we are. You cannot count on them to read the tea leaves,

look behind the scenes, connect the dots of our actions, which is another

reason why an explicit strategy conveyed to them directly is

so important, because their sensors are just not as acute as they

ought to be.

I have heard the same thing. I do not have any specific

information on that. As far as the exercises are concerned—

and so I think we can expect more provocations of this kind. As far

as the exercises are concerned, they always object to our exercises.

Anticipate the next step.

Well, if they read the newspapers as you did, they

might be confused. It has been clarified, our understanding is, by

The White House today that that is not the case, that the United

States emphatically does not acquiesce in North Korea’s going nuclear.

But the fact that there is all of this speculation about where we

might come out in terms of our overall strategy is another good

reason, knowing how difficult it is for the North Koreans to read

the tea leaves, for us, as quickly as we can, to come to a common

strategy and to articulate that strategy to them in the most direct

possible way, which is being in the same room with them.

So whatever you think about what we ought to say to North

Korea, whatever you think about the prospects of an agreement

with them, whether you are an optimist or a pessimist about that,

that is an experiment we need to run now, because our options are

narrowing and there is plenty of room for them to be confused. And

if they are confused about us and our strategy—the fact that they

are going nuclear, threatens the deepest security interests of the

United States. If they are truly confused about that, that is real

trouble because I do not think we can be or are confused about that

as a country.

I do not think it is uncharted territory. We had

verification concerns with the Soviet Union. That was similarly a

State that was good at keeping secrets. And we had a series of

arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union and now with Russia,

which are verifiable and verified. And even with respect to

North Korea, those provisions of the agreement which dealt with

plutonium at Yongbyon were thoroughly verified. We had inspectors

there. We had Americans there for sometime at Yongbyon, so

we knew exactly what they were doing at Yongbyon.

Now, it is going to be something new to them to have inspections

that move outside of Yongbyon, that cover other things, like ballistic

missiles, not just the nuclear program. So they need to understand

that an undertaking with us to eliminate their nuclear weapons

and ballistic missile programs has to be verifiable, and they are

going to have to understand that we, particularly given their record

of cheating, are going to insist upon rigorous verification. But there

is no fundamental reason why that cannot be done. They are just

going to have to agree to it.

The situation is as you described it, namely within

a matter of a few weeks after beginning the reprocessing process,

they would begin to accumulate at the rate of every few weeks a

bomb’s worth up until five or six bombs. It is exactly as you described.

It is a necessary condition.

May I just——

There is just one other thing I should add though

which is I do not think that that means that stasis is our policy.

We are trying to offer them a better future for them,

and in that sense we are in favor of change.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.