



U.S. House of Representatives
Policy Committee
Press Release
February 13, 2002

Statement by Chairman Christopher Cox (R-CA)

One day after President Bush appointed our colleague, Tony Hall (D-OH), United States Ambassador for United Nations food programs, I'm pleased to join another conscientious Democrat, Ed Markey (MA), and the chairman emeritus of the International Relations Committee, Ben Gilman (R-NY), in support of a responsible nonproliferation policy toward North Korea.

Tony, Ben, Ed, and I have worked for at least a decade to bring more attention to the plight of the people of North Korea -- the most direct victims of the cruel Kim Jon Il dictatorship. President Bush's upcoming visit to Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing will highlight both the threat that the government of North Korea poses to its neighbors in Asia and around the world, and the cruelty that the government of North Korea shows its own people. Our policy must consider boy Pyongyang's internal cruelty and its external belligerence.

North Korea is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid in the Asia-Pacific region. Through the United Nation's World Food Program, U.S. taxpayers pay for two-thirds of all food donations to Kim Jon Il's government. We supply three-quarters of the donated oil to supply heat and electricity in North Korea.

Supplementing this largesse with plutonium is not only unnecessary, but counterproductive: doing so gives Kim Jong Il more political and military power. It does nothing to help Koreans, especially considering that there are less expensive, more efficient, and more readily available means to generate electricity in North Korea.

Ambassador-designate Hall noted our policy challenge during a recent visit to North Korea, when he said this: 'The continuing crisis is most telling in the lives of Korean children. On paper, they are the best off because they get full rations from the United Nations' World Food Program. But in reality, nurseries are overflowing with orphans.... Without soap, hot water, heat, or medicine, most were dirty, coughing, and sniffing. At lunch, they gulped their milk without taking a breath and came back hungrily for seconds.'

Just last week, the Associated Press reported yet another story of how Kim Jon Il has diverted food aid from his people to his million-man army. According to the AP, a former bodyguard of Kim Jon Il said much of the food aid is being piled in warehouses for use as reserve food for war. Meanwhile, the World Food Program reported February 8 that two million children in North Korea under age five may die of hunger.

Can we be confident that a dictatorship that permits its own children to suffer so miserably while desperately maintaining a completely unnecessary arm with stolen food aid would hesitate to use nuclear blackmail against those abroad who wish to free its subjects? Even before President Bush was inaugurated, North Korea's state-run media threatened the United States in the late days of the Clinton administration. After years of U.S. aid to Kim Jon Il's government, totaling hundreds of millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars, North Korea threatened to launch a 'suicidal attack to plunge the damned U.S. territory into a sea of flame.' If this isn't evil, I don't know what is.

We cannot help the people of North Korea by sending their dictator materials giving him the sort of blackmail power President Gorbachev was sane enough not to exercise as his state collapsed. By preventing Kim Jon Il from acquiring nuclear materials before he becomes even more belligerent, perhaps we can prevent war. We certainly should not supply him with nuclear technology and materials that will make war both more likely and more deadly.

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