Informal Summary: March 30, 2004 House Committee on International Relations Hearing: The Bush Administration and Non-Proliferation: A New Strategy Emerges

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Informal summary:
March 30, 2004 House Committee on International Relations Hearing:
"The Bush Administration and Nonproliferation: A New Strategy Emerges."

Witnesses

Panel I:
John R. Bolton, Under Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, U.S. Dept. of State
written testimony:http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/bolt033004.htm.

Panel II:

Henry Sokolski, Non-Proliferation Policy Education Center
written testimony: http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/sok033004.htm
Joseph Cirincione, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
written testimony: http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/ciri033004.htm
Victor Gilinsky, Former Commissioner, Nuclear Regulator Commission
written testimony: http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/gili033004.htm

In addition to North Korea, the hearing covered a number of non-proliferation topics, such as President Bush's non-proliferation agenda outlined on February 11, 2004, concern over the designation of Pakistan as a major non-NATO ally, China's arm trade, and Libya's commitment to dismantle its nuclear weapons program. This informal summary focuses primarily on North Korea.

Opening Statements

In his opening statement, **Chairman Henry Hyde (IL)** http://wwwc.house.gov/international_relations/108/hyde033004.htm praised the Administration for the nearly unilateral war with Iraq and the example this gives to North Korea:

"The fact that we went into Iraq virtually alone…not only without the sanction of the international community but in blunt defiance of its strenuous efforts to stop us, is far from the ruinous negative it is often portrayed as. In fact, it is all to the good, for it is unambiguous proof that absolutely nothing will deter us, that the entire world arrayed against us cannot stop us. The message to those on the receiving end could not be clearer, and unless they are suicidal, they will understand that their options have been radically narrowed. . . . None of this has been lost on the North Korean regime. Our demonstrated willingness to use force to remove a threat, paired with the possibility of reward for cooperation, provides the decision-makers in Pyongyang with useful instruction in the rules of this new world. Once again, this bracketing of the regime's options was made possible by our actions in Iraq."

Rep. Brad Sherman (CA) praised the Administration for "an aggressive approach to protecting the United States from terrorism and proliferation," but suggested in relation to North Korea that more pressure be put on China: "The [North Korean] government relies on subsidized energy and other aid from the Chinese regime. The Chinese regime would prefer that North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons program, but is unwilling to do anything very substantive – except to hold talks – and we will talk, and we will talk and we will talk until the 'mushroom cloud' interrupts those talks, as Condoleezza Rice might say. But we have been unwilling to hint to China that just maybe a slight portion of their $130 billion access to our markets might be imperiled for a day, as long as they insist on continuing to subsidize North Korea. We're willing to risk the lives of our troops, but not one container of tennis shoes."

Panel I

Under Secretary John Bolton
Bolton described the Administration's nonproliferation policies, covering the entire spectrum of U.S. nonproliferation policies. He referred to the President's February 11, 2004 proposals to strengthen the nonproliferation regime, and provided details on the Administration's approach to Iraq, Iran, Libya, Pakistan, and North Korea, among other international areas of concern.

Secretary Bolton repeated the Administration's position that North Korea must agree to the "complete, verifiable, irreversible dismantlement" of their nuclear program and called on Pyongyang to follow the Libyan example of voluntary disarmament without regime change. "I think that the actions by the government of Libya provide a very clear example to other rogue states, like North

Korea and Iran, about how a country can give up its weapons of mass destruction without regime change in a manner that gives international confidence that they are serious about what they are doing."

He noted that North Korea has not made "the strategic decision" to end its nuclear weapons programs and that the six party talks will continue as part of an ongoing "effort by President Bush to seek a multilateral, peaceful diplomatic solution to the North Koreans' unrelenting pursuit of a nuclear weapons capability."

Q&A

The differences in opinion among the members of the committee were apparent in both question and answer sessions. Such differences were notably partisan in tone and at times broke down into debate among the members leaving the Secretary on the side-lines. Democratic members criticized Bolton's citation of developments in Libya as proof of the Administration's successful nonproliferation strategy. One member accused the Administration of discontinuing its efforts to prevent Japan from investing $2.8 billion in Iran following Japan's commitment to send 500 troops to Iraq. Nearly every committee member present coupled North Korea with Iran, referring to the two nations almost systematically as rogue states and urgent proliferation concerns that are linked to A.Q. Khan's underground nuclear weapons network.

Rep. Brad Sherman criticized the Administration, the U.S. public, and the U.S. mass media for focusing on Iraq while ignoring Iran and North Korea, countries that are "hostile to us that are developing nuclear weapons. He referred again to Condoleezza Rice, saying she "Told us that the first sign that an enemy has a nuclear weapon could be a mushroom cloud…if that mushroom cloud occurs, it probably will be from a nuclear weapon from Iran or North Korea."

Rep. William Delahunt (MA) questioned Sec. Bolton about a recent New York Times article that reported "the most active exchange of nuclear missile technology between North Korea and Pakistan occurred between 1998 and 2002." Although Bolton refused to go into detail in an open hearing, he did say "I'm not going to comment on newspaper reports about intelligence assessments, particularly when they are wrong."

There was considerable discussion over the effectiveness of current policy toward North Korea. In their questions to Sec. Bolton, **Rep. Rohrabacher (CA)** and **Rep. Schiff (CA)** expressed nearly diametrically opposed viewpoints comparing North Korea policy in the Clinton Bush administrations. Rep. Rohrabacher explained, "I was sitting in this room during the last administration…[and I] remember that their policy was providing basically a subsidy of hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money that eventually went to North Korea, and then the North Koreans were in reality thumbing their nose at us and lying to us about [nuclear weapons]. And now…this administration is calling them on the carpet." Rep. Rohrabacher later summarized his view, "when comparing this administration to the…last administration [on North Korea], I think we get about an A-plus-plus."

Sec. Bolton concurred with Rep. Rohrabacher, saying "I think Secretary Powell put it absolutely right on target when discussing how you deal with North Korea and looking at the Agreed Framework he said, 'We're not going to buy that horse again.'"

Rep. Schiff disagreed, saying "I'd like to ask by what measure, by what barometer can we say that we are better off vis-a-vis North Korea today than we were three years ago? Because, it seems to me the experience of the last three years has been an increase in the rate of acceleration of North

Korea's nuclear program, not a deceleration."

Sec. Bolton, critiquing the Agreed Framework and supporting the Bush Administration's approach said "The situation that existed with respect to North Korea when the administration took office was that North Korea was violating the agreed framework, was actively engaged in a production scope procurement effort to acquire the capability to do uranium enrichment, to be used in nuclear weapons, and the United States and others were supplying resources to the North Korean regime that, in effect, were propping the regime up. By exposing the North Korean deception in violation of its obligations under the Agreed Framework, I think that we contributed to the isolation of North Korea, contributed to a heightened awareness of the threat that North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons posed, and led directly to the effort that we're engaged in now through the six- party talks."

Rep. Schiff clarified his point, saying "Mr. Bolton, do you think we're better off now that North Korea has reprocessed the spent fuel?"

Sec. Bolton countered that the U.S. is not sure when reprocessing began, and then highlighted the risks of the HEU program, saying "I think that would have been an extraordinarily dangerous situation if we were confronted with it once that had become a fact." He added that the U.S. is "taking active steps to cut off the funding sources for North Korea without which its nuclear weapons program, and indeed much of the support for its elite, could not exist, through the Proliferation Security Initiative, to deny the North Koreans the hard currency that they get from the proliferation of ballistic missiles into the Middle East. . . to work with Japan and others to cut down their illegal activities in that country. . . to take active steps to deny the North Koreans access to financial resources that are critical to continuing their nuclear program."

Rep. Schiff acknowledged that the situation in North Korea is "a very tough problem," but reasserted his position that "It [is] indefensible to argue that we are better off now… than we were three years ago. Now, it may have been that a different policy would have similarly failed. But this policy has borne very little fruit. And I think, unless we acknowledge that, we're not being candid about what's taking place in North Korea."

Panel II

The hearing's second panel brought testimony from Henry Sokolski of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center, Joseph Cirincione of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and Victor Gilinsky, who was commissioner of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission during the Ford and Carter administrations. Their written testimony is available online at the links above.

Mr. Sokolski offered proposals to strengthen the international nonproliferation regime and the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), citing North Korea, Libya, Iran and Pakistan as the sparks "for the most serious debate about nonproliferation controls since India tested its first nuclear device in 1974." He also stated that "When the NPT does speak about the inalienable right members have to develop nuclear energy; it explicitly circumscribes this right by demanding that it be exercised in conformity with [certain] prohibitions. . . It's our lack of will to properly read this treaty that gets us in trouble," not loopholes in the treaty itself.

In his opening remarks, **Mr. Cirincione** strayed from his written statement, citing a "sharp disagreement" with both Mr. Bolton's testimony and Chairman Hyde's opening statement. Mr. Cirincione summarized what he felt were inaccuracies in Sec. Bolton's portrayal of events in Iraq and Libya, emphasizing that "the negotiations over Libya's weapons of mass destruction began years

earlier. . . [and] Libya put their weapons of mass destruction on the table years ago" when they determined that this would be the only way to get the U.S. to lift sanctions. He added that people involved in the negotiations have said that "Even when the Libyans made the approach that they did in March of 2003 and offered a complete reversal of their programs, that there were members of this administration who didn't want to take the deal," but instead wanted to overthrow the Libyan regime. This is significant because "The Libyan deal is the opposite of the administration's declared policy on how to deal with non-proliferation;" and preventative war such as war with Iraq is the hallmark of the Administration's approach.

Mr. Cirincione warned "We have to learn the lessons of Libya, learn how to accept the right balance between force and diplomacy – clearly both have played a role here – and apply that lesson to North Korea. . . We are deadlocked on North Korea between factions within the administration who want to overthrow the regime, and factions that want to make a deal with the regime. And as a result we're unable to move forward."

Mr. Gilinsky focused on proposals to strengthen the NPT regime, primarily on ways to limit non-nuclear states' access to a complete fuel cycle.

Q&A

Concluding an exchange on China and Pakistan, **Rep. Rohrabacher** stated "You can bargain all you want to with the Saddam Husseins of the world, and no matter what they say, within five minutes it doesn't make any difference what they said, because they are liars and they're immoral. And it's regime change with those type of horrible dictators that will make a difference in this world and in dealing with this problem."

The statement was, in part, directed at **Rep. Ackerman (NY)**, who deflected the comment toward the panel as a question, "Unless the U.S. and like-minded states are prepared to militarily change the regimes in Iran and North Korea, I would think you'd have to persuade them to give up their nuclear programs…They believe they have legitimate interests, important national interests, requiring nuclear weapons for deterrence, for defense, even for prestige, for ego, and for public political support in their own country and regions. How do we influence their perceptions of their interests, however misguided they might be?"

Mr. Sokolski was first to respond, saying "What we do not want to do and should be very careful to avoid doing in all these cases, North Korea included, is to reach for any deal that will undermine the standards necessary to keep others from emulating the proliferation of the country we're dealing with… My center took strong exception to the

Agreed Framework."

Upon **Rep. Ackerman's** request, **Mr. Sokolski** explained that the light water reactors, which were to be provided to North Korea under the specifications of the Agreed Framework, would have given North Korea the ability to reprocess significant amounts of additional plutonium for nuclear weapons. **Mr. Gilinksy** agreed, saying "The two reactors that we're giving them cold produce more plutonium not only than their little reactor that they had, but than all the reactors that they had under construction."

Ultimately, **Mr. Sokolski** offered a very pessimistic response to Rep. Ackerman's initial question, saying "I don't think there's anything we can do here, [or] offer them to give this up. They will do a deal, but they won't do a deal that involves real verification… I don't think this is going to be resolved with the current regime… I don't think there's any sort of magic arrangement that's going

to cause them to give up their nuclear threat."

"**Mr. Gilinksy** agreed, saying "I don't think this is going to be resolved with the current regime. And I think what we need to do is wait them out and hem them in as best we can and use other ways to soften them up and have the juices of capitalism maybe corrode their spirit. . . I think we have to constrain them as best we can. . . For example, Secretary Bolton mentioned trying to cut out their money supply from Japan, trying to keep them from getting resources in all sorts of other ways that involve all sorts of illegal enterprises, trying to influence the Chinese as best we can. I think there are things we can do, but there's nothing that's going to solve this problem in any simple manner."

Mr. Cirincione repeated his advice on the North Korean nuclear weapons issue, saying "I think we can do a deal with North Korea. I think we can buy them out for a fraction of what we're spending on some other defense programs…Let's make a deal that they can't refuse. Let's offer them a complete package solution and see if they can accept it."

Rep. Rohrabacher interjected, alluding to the earlier discussion of the Agreed Framework and its limitations, "I thought that's what we did about 10 years ago."

Mr. Cirincione replied, "The Agreed Framework was a perfectly acceptable short-term solution. It was never intended to be the final word. I agreed with Secretary of State Colin Powell. When he came in, after being briefed by the Clinton team, he thought we should continue those policies and close the whole package deal. He was overruled by this administration. As a result, we find ourselves where we are today."

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