

A MESSAGE FROM GENERAL B. B. BELL

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Korea Veterans Association
International Symposium on National Security
14 December 2006

I want to thank Chairman Park for his invitation to me to present a message to your important forum. I regret I am unable to participate due to prior commitments, and I appreciate the opportunity to share some of my thoughts with you. Your theme, "Exploring National Survival Strategies Under North Korea's Nuclear Threat", is a vital topic given today's security environment. Nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula are dangerous and represent a potentially destabilizing threat to the entire region and the world.

North Korea does not have a record of good faith negotiations. They have consistently backed away from a number of important opportunities to enter the family of peaceful nations. On at least five different occasions in the past 20 years, north Korea has signed agreements committing to a nuclear free peninsula. Today, however, north Korea not only admits to having an active nuclear weapons development program, but it has tested such a weapon.

North Korea has repeatedly violated the agreements it signed apparently to earn concessions from the international community. In 1992, north Korea and the Republic of Korea signed the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Peninsula. In 1993, north Korea threatened to withdraw from the Nonproliferation Treaty. The following year the Agreed Framework was signed with the U.S. promising two light water reactors. In 2002, north Korea admitted it had an active nuclear weapons program, a violation of numerous agreements; and in early 2003, it withdrew from the Nonproliferation Treaty, the first such country to ever do so. In 2005, at the 4th Round of the Six Party Talks, north Korea committed to abandon all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and return to the treaty on non-proliferation. Again, since then north Korea has continued to develop nuclear weapons and now has tested one.

North Korea's actions are not those expected of a peace-loving neighbor. The international community has never had full and verifiable knowledge of north Korean nuclear activities, nor can it believe assurances regarding the peaceful character of the north Korean nuclear program. This is why the Proliferation Security Initiative, announced by President Bush in 2003, is vital. The United States has identified the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as a significant threat for the entire world. The intent of PSI is to prevent the flow of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related materials either to or from states or non-state actors.

North Korea's aggressive development of nuclear weapons is a regional and international problem, and as such, requires an international solution. While we all hope one day for a peaceful and successful reunification of the peninsula, we should not be lulled by rhetoric. North Korea's historical lack of compliance means future agreements must include verifiable confidence building measures. This should be accomplished through both real incentives and accountability, in a phased manner in line with the principle of "commitment for commitment, action for action." The Six Party Talks is the best venue to convince north Korea – through diplomatic, economic, and political means – that the path to success and prosperity is in complying with international will. It is important that the international community insist that north Korea end its nuclear program, honor its agreements and return to the community of responsible nations.

Again, I thank all the members of the Korea Veterans Association for their service in defense of this great nation. The Republic of Korea enjoys wonderful freedom, democracy and prosperity due to your selfless service. For this and much more, we are all indebted to you. I wish you a very productive and successful symposium.



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