



U.S.-CHINA ECONOMIC AND SECURITY
REVIEW COMMISSION

Hearing on China's Proliferation Practices and Role in the North Korea Crisis

Opening Statement of
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Commissioner

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We will now hear from two panels that will shed additional light on the North Korea crisis and China's role in it. We are pleased to learn more about this topic from three non-governmental experts and an Administration official directly involved in the matter.

As discussed this morning, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is one of modern life's most frightening realities. It is a truly global concern. Should China seek global respect, it must act responsibly and effectively on universal issues of concern such as human rights and WMD proliferation. The U.S. government and the governments of other nations continue to voice their concerns, yet Chinese companies continue to export WMD-related technologies to problematic countries such as Iran. It is always fascinating, or rather, horrifying for me to hear that the Chinese government is able to use thousands of individuals to monitor its own people's internet activity yet claims that it cannot control the proliferation behavior of a handful of companies – companies with ties, often familial, with the government.

Another issue closely related to the proliferation question, concerns North Korea. China provides the majority of food and oil to the North Korean regime and in effect, keeps Kim Jong-il in power. This regime, aside from presiding over the longest running human rights debacle of any modern regime, has chosen to play a risky game of nuclear blackmail with its neighbors and the United States.

I cannot overstate this fact -- China's interests with North Korea do not coincide with our own. It is true that China is concerned about a nuclearized North Korea, but Chinese media sources have stated the main cause for this is fear of a nuclear arms race involving other regional players reacting to Pyongyang's ambitions. It is also true that China is fearful of seeing North Korea descend into a state of chaos should the current North Korean regime collapse. What is in China's interests is to maintain the Kim Jong-il regime and thus maintain North Korea as a traditional "buffer" zone. The food and oil exports have accomplished this goal thus far. At the same time, China wishes to engage the other regional powers to quell any fears and maintain the status quo.

Since their initial meeting in August 2003, the so-called Six-Party Talks have been the instrument by which five nations greatly affected by North Korea's actions have sought to obtain responsible steps from Pyongyang. The outcome of the talks has not been positive and China has not fought hard to see real progress. It was disturbing to see, earlier this week, a report that China is calling for the U.S. to deal with North Korea on a bilateral basis. China has since said the article was inaccurate and claims that Beijing remains committed to the Six-Party Talks. If this is truly the case, we expect to see China using all its leverage, as soon as possible, to bring about positive results.

I look forward to hearing more on this in the next two panels. These topics are crucial to the security of the entire world, not just the United States. Thank you.