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Opening Statement

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Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this important hearing regarding North Korea, nuclear weapons, and the Six Party Talks. The situation that the United States currently finds itself in, with North Korea refusing to give up its nuclear arms, is becoming more serious with each weapons test and missile launch. For far too long, the countries involved in the Six Party Talks negotiated in good faith with Pyongyang assuming that all parties to the process shared the common goal of nuclear nonproliferation. Sadly, this is not the case, because on May 25 of this year, North Korea issued a clear rejection of the Six Party Talks principles by detonating a nuclear bomb. Thus, I can only conclude that the goal of nuclear nonproliferation on the Korean Peninsula is further away today than before.

We as a Nation are now faced with a truly difficult and vexing dilemma regarding North Korea that does not have a clear resolution, particularly during this time of possible leadership transition in North Korea. Indeed, how will the Administration engage North Korea and urge its irrational leaders to willingly give up nuclear weapons when these leaders view the possession of such weapons as fundamental to the survival of the regime? How can the U.S. convince vital partners such as China that keeping the status quo on their northern border is not in their best interest? Finally, how do we ensure that the desire to solve this impasse does not weaken our important alliances and friendship with Japan and South Korea?

North Korea's actions in recent weeks can only be characterized as extremely serious. While I note China and Russia did support the U.S. at the United Nations Security Council, I find the agreed upon resolution to be difficult to enforce, particularly with regard to preventing weapons proliferation. This "least common denominator" approach does little to genuinely punish North Korea for its behavior. After all, how many times has the North defied international condemnation and carried on with its business as normal?

Mr. Chairman, the future of the Six Party Talks is not very bright given the current course of events. Regardless of the North's true intentions behind these tests, whether for domestic consumption or leverage in negotiations, the fact is that Pyongyang is not giving up these arms and this makes the world a more dangerous place. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses.