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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**  
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:  
“Countering the North Korean Threat: New Steps in U.S. Policy”  
February 7, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

For years, the United States and its allies have been rightly concerned about the threat from North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs. Last year saw two nuclear tests, over twenty missiles fired, including a submarine-launched ballistic missile. Another ICBM test *could* come within weeks.

Soon, many believe North Korea will be able to target all 50 states and our Asian allies with a nuclear warhead. The quick speed with which North Korea’s missile program is advancing is a real “game changer” for our national security. It is no wonder that former President Obama – after years of practicing a failed policy of “strategic patience” – warned incoming President Trump that North Korea was the top national security threat to the United States.

Thankfully, because of Congressional leadership, the new White House already has tools to begin seriously tackling this threat. Ranking Member Engel and I are proud of the Committee’s role last Congress in passing the *North Korea Sanctions and Policy Enhancement Act*, the only comprehensive North Korea sanctions bill to be signed into law.

With this law, the United States designated North Korea as a “primary money laundering concern” and found Kim Jong-un and his top lieutenants responsible for “running a gulag masquerading as a country” – as the *Economist* put it. It took our Congressional push for the Obama Administration to act.

The new Administration will find that it can put this law to much greater use than did the last White House. And there are other steps that can be taken to crack down on the Kim regime. With hundreds of thousands of North Korean laborers abroad – sending as much as \$2 billion a year back to the regime in hard currency - we should look at targeting this expatriate labor. Loopholes in our sanctions on North Korea’s shipping and financial sectors must be closed. And when we discover that foreign banks have helped Kim Jong-un skirt sanctions – as those in China have repeatedly done – we must give those banks and businesses a stark choice: do business with Kim Jong-un or the U.S.

We should also step up the defenses of our allies and our homeland, along with a more concerted information push.

After all, Thae Yong Ho – North Korea’s former deputy ambassador to Britain and the highest ranking defector in twenty years –said last month that international sanctions are beginning to

squeeze the regime. He also said that the spread of information from the outside world is having a real and negative impact. So it shouldn't be a surprise that South Korea has reported that high-level defections are *surging*.

Of course, we won't be able to tackle the North Korean threat on our own. So I am glad that the Secretary of Defense's first trip overseas was to visit our allies in South Korea and Japan. In Seoul, General Mattis called the U.S.-South Korea alliance the "linchpin of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region" and made clear the Administration's commitment to deploy a U.S. missile defense system known as "THAAD." General Mattis' trip to the region was an important reminder that our "ironclad" relationship continues through political transitions – both here at home and in South Korea.

Our panel this morning has important insights on Kim Jong-un's goals, vulnerabilities that we can exploit, and how the President can make better use of the authorities Congress has given him.

I now turn to the ranking member for any opening comments he may have.