

Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ted Yoho (R-FL)**  
Chairman of the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific  
Subcommittee Hearing: Pressuring North Korea: Evaluating Options  
March 21, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon everyone, and my thanks to my colleagues and the panel for joining me today to conduct this timely and important hearing. We're meeting today during what is probably the most significant shift in U.S. policy towards North Korea since it began its illicit nuclear program. The new administration has shown a willingness to embrace new thinking on the North Korea issue, and my goal for today's hearing is to discuss ways Congress can continue to drive a policy on North Korea that finally implements all the tools we have available.

Secretary of State Tillerson left the world's media breathless last week when he restated that "all options are on the table" regarding North Korea, implying military options. His next statement, that "we have many, many steps we can take before we get to that point," received less attention but was actually more significant.

This is what I hope to focus on today: the many unused or incompletely implemented tools we can use before the last resort of military action, something none of us would like to see. North Korea's nuclear program has never been a bigger threat, and we need to respond with all the tools at our disposal.

If anything, Pyongyang has dramatically accelerated its belligerent behavior, conducting two nuclear tests and two dozen missile launches last year. Since 2015, Kim has tested more missiles than Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung combined, while making continued progress towards an ICBM capable of targeting nearly the entire continental U.S. While Secretary Tillerson was visiting China on Saturday, Kim Jong Un oversaw a rocket engine test that could contribute to these efforts.

For 20 years, we have responded to every North Korean provocation with either isolation or inducements to negotiate. Our efforts to isolate Pyongyang have either been incomplete, or hamstrung by China. Meanwhile, North Korea has used negotiations to extract wealth without ever slowing weapons development.

Since 1995, we have provided \$1.3 billion in economic and humanitarian assistance to North Korea, and weapons development has only accelerated. As Secretary Tillerson stated during his trip to the region last week, this is "20 years of a failed approach."

The Obama administration's "strategic patience" was a low-effort strategy, taking some half-measures to isolate North Korea, and then simply waiting for Kim Jong Un to wake up and give away his nuclear weapons.

This ineffective approach has gotten us no closer to a denuclearized peninsula. A more forward-leaning North Korea policy will require more effort and resolve, as we've seen passivity fail time and again.

It's time to take this threat seriously and use our entire toolbox. Congress can be an important part of this work. We have to ensure continued, robust support for injecting outside information into North Korea to encourage defection and expose Kim's propaganda. Thae Yong-ho, the highest ranking North Korean defector in decades, recently said that this was the best way to force change in North Korea.

This Committee has also done important work in increasing financial pressure on the regime, and I look forward to continuing our work on sanctions this Congress. We should also relist North Korea as a state sponsor of terror in light of its long history of horrific crimes, most recently the assassination of Kim Jong Nam with VX nerve gas.

The administration must also start using its secondary sanctions authority against Chinese entities that have allowed for North Korea's continued weapons development. China accounts for 90 percent of North Korea's economic activity. The failed policies of the past assumed that if the United States did not anger China, it would help promote denuclearization.

It's time to stop pretending that China's North Korea policy is motivated by anything other than extreme self-interest. China has benefitted from undermining sanctions and tolerating North Korea's nuclear belligerence. North Korea's missiles are not aimed at China, and the growing security challenge is an excellent distraction from China's own illicit activities.

I've been heartened to see both Secretary Mattis and Secretary Tillerson reaffirm our critical alliances with the Republic of Korea and Japan. Our officials also rightly continue to reject China's proposal that we halt military exercises with South Korea to bring North Korea to negotiations.

China's retaliation against South Korea over the deployment of THAAD is also unacceptable. THAAD is solely oriented towards the defense of South Korea. China should address the threat that makes it necessary, rather than interfering with our security cooperation.

It's encouraging to hear that the administration will not make further concessions to hold talks, or negotiate a weapons freeze that leaves the North Korean threat in place. SWIFT's recent

decision to finally cut off the remaining North Korean banks from its financial messaging service has also been a welcome development.

I'm looking forward to helping build a stronger, more complete North Korea policy, and look forward to hearing from our panel on these developments and options.