

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 11, 2018

President Donald J. Trump  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are encouraged by your efforts to pursue direct diplomacy with North Korea with the dual goals of resolving the nearly seven-decade-long conflict and achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

As many of us wrote to you in May 2017, diplomacy is the only path to resolve the tensions between our countries. There is a broad popular mandate for this diplomatic approach: at a time when he has engaged in an unprecedented diplomatic effort, South Korea's President Moon Jae-in has an 85 percent approval rating, while recent polls indicate that four out of five Americans support diplomacy with North Korea.

We remain concerned that some, from both parties and inside and outside of your administration, seek to scuttle progress by attempting to limit the parameters of the talks, including by insisting on full and immediate denuclearization or other unrealistic commitments by North Korea at an early date. The comments made by National Security Advisor John Bolton, and echoed at times by both yourself and the Vice President, regarding the Libya model -- referencing the complete dismantlement of Libya's fledgling nuclear program -- was an especially unconstructive approach given the subsequent NATO intervention and overthrow of the Qaddafi regime in 2011. Requiring unreasonable concessions before talking, or early in the negotiations process, is precisely why this conflict remains unresolved.

Instead, we emphasize the tremendous value of incremental progress that advances the potential for future agreements. Among the positive steps that you can commit to right away are: pledges or agreements to formally end the 68-year war, ending the practice of US-ROK "decapitation" military exercises, and support for important cooperative efforts such as vital humanitarian assistance, parliamentary dialogue and exchanges, reunions between Koreans and Korean American families, and the repatriation of US servicemember remains.

Such steps, combined with commensurate actions by North Korea, could help facilitate the phased denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. One of the world's foremost nuclear weapons experts and one of the only Americans to visit North Korea's nuclear facilities, Sig Hecker, notes that the best the United States can hope for is a phased denuclearization, which would manage the greatest risks early on and then address lower priority aspects of the program over the course of ten or more years.

We reiterate that the United States cannot achieve a lasting agreement alone. Allies and partners are vital in making a durable peace. That is why we are gravely concerned with your violation of the Iran nuclear agreement. Your approach to this feat of international diplomacy places substantial obstacles in your path as you seek historic progress on peace.

We once again must remind you that in the unfortunate event of a setback or collapse in talks, you do not have the authority under the U.S. Constitution or U.S. law to strike North Korea. With the sole exception of instances requiring a response to a sudden attack, our founding fathers clearly granted the power to declare war to the Congress under Article I, Section 8, Clause 11. As James Madison explained, “The power to declare war, including the power of judging the causes of war, is fully and exclusively vested in the legislature [...] the executive has no right, in any case, to decide the question, whether there is or is not cause for declaring war.”

Further, our close ally South Korea has made clear that a military approach to this situation poses unacceptable risks to their people and nation. As the previous administrations dating back to that of Richard Nixon determined, any military option could precipitate an unacceptable counter-reaction from Pyongyang, which today could immediately threaten the lives of as many as a third of the South Korean population, put nearly 30,000 U.S. service members and over 100,000 other U.S. citizens residing in South Korea in grave danger, and also threaten our other regional allies such as Japan. Moreover, the Pentagon reported this year that only through a costly, bloody ground invasion would the United States be able to secure all of North Korea’s nuclear weapons. Secretary of Defense James Mattis said that a U.S.-North Korea war would be “catastrophic.” In the event talks break down, the U.S. deterrence that was successful in avoiding nuclear war with the USSR for decades and has been successful with North Korea for years, remains the only policy for which you have constitutional authority.

Accordingly, we stand ready to provide support for potentially historic progress made through diplomacy, but will continue to stand with our ally South Korea in vehemently opposing any return to threats of illegal and unacceptable military action.

Sincerely,



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard  
Member of Congress



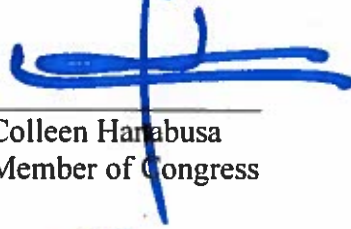
Bobby L. Rush  
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Colleen Hanabusa  
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