

Dear Senator,

The undersigned veterans, national security, peace and humanitarian organizations write to you in response to the Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific, and International Cybersecurity Policy's February 25 [hearing](#) titled, "North Korea Policy One Year After Hanoi." Our organizations work in coalition to promote diplomatic solutions to the US-North Korea nuclear crisis, and we appreciate Chairman Cory Gardner and Ranking Member Ed Markey conducting this hearing to examine these critical issues.

Last year, members of our coalition created [this resource](#) outlining pro-peace, pro-diplomacy policy toward North Korea. Based on these principles, we would like to respond to some key points raised during the hearing, and welcome the opportunity to set up a meeting to discuss them further:

There is no military solution. As all three witnesses testified, the United States must continue to pursue and prioritize diplomacy with North Korea. Although negotiations under the Trump administration are currently stalled, diplomacy remains the best option for addressing the security challenge posed by the ongoing US-North Korea nuclear crisis. We strongly oppose all arguments for initiating a [US military action](#) against North Korea. A preventive strike, also known as a "bloody nose strike," risks igniting an open conflict that could escalate to nuclear war, immediately endangering the lives of millions of people on the Korean Peninsula.

Demanding a North Korean declaration of its nuclear inventory is a non-starter. Dr. Sue Mi Terry testified that the United States should pursue an interim agreement with North Korea "only *after* Kim has shown a willingness to provide an inventory of his nuclear program (facilities, weapons, and fissile material stockpiles)." But such a demand would be a non-starter and would preclude a series of steps that would actually improve the current security situation. As the former director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory, Dr. Siegfried Hecker, has [argued](#), insisting on a declaration up front is a "dead end" and "would, in Kim's view, likely be far too risky in that it would essentially provide a targeting list for US military planners."

Short of a North Korean declaration, there are many interim steps that the United States can and should pursue to shore up the potential for successful peace and denuclearization. These steps include, but are not limited to:

- Formalizing North Korea's April 2018 self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile testing
- Opening liaison offices in Washington and Pyongyang and taking other steps toward normalized relations
- Strengthening sanctions exemptions for humanitarian activities and removing travel restrictions to improve humanitarian access and people-to-people contact
- Continuing the repatriation of POW/MIA remains
- Facilitating reunions between long-divided North Korean and Korean American families, and granting any necessary sanctions waivers for in-person or video reunions between separated South Korean and North Korean families.

US-ROK joint military exercises can be adapted to meet diplomatic and security objectives.

Bruce Klingner testified that the suspension of US-ROK joint military exercises “did not lead to diplomatic progress nor reduce the North Korean military threat.” However, there is ample [evidence](#) to suggest that the modification of exercises in the past, and under the current administration, led to a more favorable environment for dialogue without undermining the US-ROK alliance’s ability to mount an effective defense. As Acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan [testified](#) last year, there has been no decline in readiness.

Furthermore, several Pentagon officials have stated that it is an appropriate confidence-building measure within the framework of diplomacy. In the [words](#) of former USFK Commander General Vincent K. Brooks, “[T]here has to be room for diplomatic maneuvering... to occur. And if creating leverage or traction comes from these adjustments to the exercises, then that’s a risk that has to be consciously taken.”

Pursuing an end to the Korean War would have positive ramifications. We encourage Members to take a comprehensive view of the US-North Korea nuclear crisis, which is rooted in the 70-year-old ongoing Korean War. The continued state of war is not a mere technicality — it is the root cause of militarism and tensions that must be resolved if there is to be real progress with North Korea on denuclearization and human rights. As the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in North Korea, Tomas Quintana, [told us](#), “A declaration on peace and development in the Korean Peninsula, and a swift resolution of the armistice status, would create the atmosphere and space needed for further discussions on denuclearization, less isolation, more access, and respect for human rights.” Formally ending the Korean War is the most effective trust-building mechanism available. It costs zero dollars, removes North Korea’s stated justification for nuclear weapons, and does not undermine the US-ROK alliance.

Thanks very much for your careful consideration of these issues. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you would like to set up a meeting to discuss further.

Sincerely,

About Face: Veterans Against the War
American Friends Service Committee
Center for International Policy
Institute for Policy Studies, New Internationalism Project
Just Foreign Policy
Nuclear Age Peace Foundation
Peace Action
Win Without War
Women's Action for New Directions (WAND)
Women Cross DMZ