



IN MY OPINION

By Irene Mandra

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I came across this interesting article, and I thought you might like to read it.

Written by Dr. Hamre

Subject: Running out of time

Last week I participated in a high-level discussion with a senior representative from the Administration. The topic was North Korea. And at one point, the individual said that the Administration believes “we are running out of time on North Korea.” “What the hell are you talking about,” I said. Let us go through this systematically.

We should survey the real facts-not what people want to believe, but what is true. First, North Korea is not going to give up nuclear weapons just because we want them to. They are a failed economy with only one thing going for them-their nuclear weapons program. They will not give it up ever.

Second, China will put pressure on North Korea to express their displeasure, but not to break North Korea. China wants a divided Korean peninsula. The last thing they want is for North Korea to collapse and have South Korea take over. China is willing to put pressure on North Korea to get North Korea to stop doing things that are awkward for China. North Korea’s provocative military gestures are awkward for China, which is why China is putting pressure on them now. But China will not break North Korea because they need North Korea. And North Korea knows this. China’s real strategy is to drive a wedge between the United States and South Korea.

Third, we are never going to reward North Korea for becoming a weapon state. Somehow the North Koreans think that once they can threaten the United States, we will give up and give them something in exchange for being nice to us. That will never happen. We will support North Korea financially only when they abandon nuclear weapons. That won’t happen, so there are no rewards on the horizon for North Korea.

Fourth, we anticipated North Korea's actions 20 years ago. We started then to deploy a missile defense system in Alaska designed to knock down North Korean missiles. It is in place, and we can expand it. The purpose of a missile defense system is not to keep blocking wave after wave of attacking missiles. The purpose of a missile defense system is to buy time - to block the initial attack long enough for us to retaliate with overwhelming nuclear destruction. That will happen. North Korea knows that will happen. North Korea is not suicidal.

Fifth, we are not going to invade North Korea to find their nuclear weapons and destroy them. The North Koreans know this. They also know that we are not going to preemptively attack them because they now have a nuclear retaliatory capability and the destruction of our South Korean (and maybe Japanese) ally would be horrendous and unacceptable.

Taking all this together, it is clear that we are not running out of time. Indeed, time has stopped for the path we have been on for 15 years. But deterrence has worked for 50 years with Russia, it will work for North Korea.

I am dismayed by our rhetoric in Washington. We are talking like frightened little rabbits, afraid of a wolf in the forest. We have nothing to be afraid of, and the more we act like frightened little critters, the more we reward North Korea for pursuing a dead-end strategy. We tried a policy of dissuasion for the past 15 years, and it has failed. But a strategy of deterrence has worked and will continue to work.

This past weekend I heard a very prominent and influential senator say that we should not send families with American military personnel who are deployed to Korea. This only feeds the fear and paranoia about North Korea that goes nowhere. The five facts outlined above dictate a logical and calm policy-deterrence. It is time for everyone in the U.S. to stop running around with frightened cries of "we are running out of time." We are not running out of time. We have all the time we need. North Korea has no options for improving their situation, and we shouldn't give them the satisfaction of us being afraid of them. North Korea is trying to stampede us into a negotiation, and we have nothing to gain from that.

Everyone in Washington should just calm down. Stop working ourselves up to a fevered pitch with breathless rhetoric that has no policy direction. We have lived with this before and we will live with it now. Thankfully, over a twenty-year period, we built the insurance policy we now need. The Brits had it right in World War II- "Keep calm, carry on."