

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 6, 2018

The Honorable Ed Royce
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Royce,

Thank you for your leadership of our committee. We are very concerned by recent reports on efforts by the North Korean regime to expand production of nuclear fuel; to make improvements to missile facilities; and to deceive the United States during the course of ongoing negotiations. We would like to request a hearing with Administration officials when the House returns from the Independence Day recess.

Late last week, NBC reported on an assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency indicating that production of nuclear fuel has increased at multiple previously-undisclosed sites since the start of discussions between our two governments. NBC writes, "In recent months, even as the two sides engaged in diplomacy, North Korea was stepping up its production of enriched uranium for nuclear weapons, five U.S. officials say, citing the latest intelligence assessment."¹

In the lead-up to the President's discussions with Kim Jong Un, arms control experts expressed repeated concerns that North Korea was likely operating undisclosed enrichment facilities aside from the disclosed facility at Yongbyon. The classified defense assessment not only confirms these assessments, but indicates that enrichment activity has ramped up.

In addition to the defense intelligence assessment, reporting from recent days adds to concerns that North Korea might have been aggressively expanding missile and nuclear-related activities during the course of bilateral negotiations. Late June imagery analysis by independent observatory 38 North, a project of the Stimson Center, indicates the regime has continued improvements to its key nuclear facility, writing that "improvements to the infrastructure at North Korea's Yongbyon Nuclear Scientific Research Center are continuing at a rapid pace."²

¹ Cube, Dilanian, and Lee. North Korea has increased nuclear production at secret sites, say U.S. officials. NBC News. 29 June, 2018. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/north-korea/north-korea-has-increased-nuclear-production-secret-sites-say-u-n887926>

² Pabian, Bermudez Jr., and Liu. Infrastructure Improvements at North Korea's Yongbyon Nuclear Research Facility. 38 North. 26 June, 2018. <https://www.38north.org/2018/06/yongbyon062618/>

Separately, recent independent imagery analysis by experts at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies indicates that North Korea was expanding a missile facility in the run-up to the bilateral summit. Bloomberg reports that the rocket-engine facility produces engines for ballistic missiles and other components, such as warhead re-entry vehicles that could be used on long-range ballistic missiles capable of reaching the U.S. mainland.³

We are extremely concerned by this active, cumulative deception on the part of the North Korean regime and the corollary impact on our bilateral denuclearization talks. As the Committee of jurisdiction, we would be responsible for a potential winding down of sanctions on North Korea and for approving any other “sweeteners” agreed to as part of a comprehensive deal. It is vital to our continued oversight that the Committee hear from the Administration on these concerning revelations and their assessment of ongoing discussions. We believe proper oversight requires a hearing prior to the August recess.

We look forward to working with you to address this critical threat to the United States.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

³ Kong, Kanga. North Korea Expanding Missile-Manufacturing Plant, Report Finds. Bloomberg. 2 July, 2018. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-07-02/north-korea-expanding-missile-manufacturing-plant-report-finds>