

Tuesday, October 24th, 2006

North Korea: There has been a lot of talk of late about what happened to let North Korea's nuclear program get to this point. I actually do not believe that this discussion is as productive as taking a close look at where we currently are.

So just where are we? Most underground nuclear tests are between 5,000 and 10,000 tons of TNT equivalent. The North Koreans alerted the Chinese to their nuclear test about a week before they performed it. They told the Chinese that they were going to test a 2,000 ton bomb (by comparison, the bomb dropped on Nagasaki was 20,000 tons). The actual yield of the explosion, as determined by seismic and other monitoring, was only 200 to 400 tons. That means they only achieved 10-20% of their expected yield. And we had a hard time determining that it was actually nuclear because it did not penetrate the surface as most nuclear tests do. In other words, it was a failure.

The good news is that we really do not have to worry that North Korea is going to launch a nuclear missile at San Francisco. Their missile technology is just not there yet either. Furthermore, they are a dirt poor country with few resources with which to invest in further development. Also, with the Chinese, Japanese, Russians and South Koreans all opposing their nuclear weapons program, they are without allies in this effort in the region. That's the good news.

The North Korean threat must be dealt with. But the greater threat is still Iran whose nuclear program has the benefit of financial resources (from oil) and allies in the region. Because of either Iran or North Korea or those threats not yet identified, we should have been working more aggressively to develop the missile defense shield that President Reagan talked about 20 years ago.

Military Chaplains: A few weeks ago I wrote about the controversy in the FY 2007 defense authorization bill over whether military chaplains would be allowed to pray "according to their faith" or whether they would have to be "sensitive" to who might be listening or be able to pray at all. The Army and Air Force had instituted policies about being "sensitive" which meant that in some cases Christian chaplains could not mention Christ and Rabbis could not mention Abraham and so forth. The House version of the bill had language that would have let chaplains use denominational prayers following their own conscience.

The final version of the bill which has now been signed into law by the president contained a compromise win for the House version. The language the House had adopted was not in the final bill, however, language was approved that requires the Army and Navy to remove recent directives on prayer and return to earlier practices used by the Army and Navy. So, military chaplains should again be able to pray as they like. But we should try again to get express language to that effect so that a branch of the armed forces can't restrict it again.

Budget Deficit: You probably didn't see much on CNN or CBS because it is positive news which they seem to not want you to know, but the deficit is down again. The deficit stood at nearly \$500 billion when I became a member of Congress 11 months ago. It is now about half

that at \$248 billion. This is because tax cuts and a strong economy continue to bring in double digit revenue increases to the federal government while overall spending growth has been restrained in this year's budget to about 3%. Because of the tax cut driven economy, September 15, 2006 was the largest single day ever for revenue to the federal government. The feds took in \$85.8 billion on that day alone which eclipsed the previous record of \$71 billion. If we continue the economic growth and spending control, we will have a surplus within 2 years.

But there are those (such as Rep. Charlie Rangel, the top Democrat on the committee which oversees tax policy) who want to roll back all the tax cuts and raise spending which will plunge us back into deficits. That wrong thinking must not prevail.

Car Show: On a lighter note, I have been getting dozens of calls from constituents looking for my help with an interesting situation in our community. A gathering of car enthusiasts that meet every Saturday morning have had to stop meeting at Crystal Cove in Newport Beach. What used to be just a few guys with cars and coffee has just outgrown that charming location. This past Saturday it was held at Ford's Premier Auto Group location in Irvine. The good news is that it was huge, well organized and had thousands of people and dozens of cars (including me and one of my classic Corvettes). The bad news is that it is now too big and disruptive for anywhere in Newport Beach including Fashion Island. Publicity has made this weekly rendezvous into something it never was before so it will have to be housed in a very different place. And those of us car guys and gals will have to get our fix of cool cars and ocean view in different places.

Until next week, I remain respectfully,

Congressman John Campbell