"Arms Control and Nonproliferation Challenges in Northeast Asia"
Ambassador Thomas Graham, Jr.
Special Representative of the President for
Arms Control, Nonproliferation and Disarmament
Sponsored by the Center for War, Peace, and the News Media
and the Center for International Strategy, Technology, and Policy
Atlanta Renaissance Hotel
February 21, 1997

Good evening. I would like to thank John Endicott and Rob Leavitt for inviting me here and for making our discussion tonight on Northeast Asia possible. I am very glad to have the opportunity to address this fine group of journalists. The subject is timely, as Secretary of State Albright's trip to China, Deng Xiaoping's death, and last week's defection of a top North Korean official once again draw the world's attention to this region.

As we move closer to the twenty-first century, Asia has become increasingly important to U.S. interests. As President Clinton said in his State of the Union Address, "America must look to the East no less than to the West. Our Security demands it . . . Our prosperity requires it." And no region is of more concern to the U.S. than Northeast Asia. The continuing presence of more than 100,000 soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen of the U.S. Pacific Command illustrates the significance which we attach to this part of the world. The United State's primary goal is to maintain peace and stability in the region and to protect our troops -- as President Clinton stated, "we are helping to shape an Asian Pacific community of cooperation, not conflict." One important tool to do just that is arms control.

Arms control is an important part of U.S. national security policy. As our former Secretary of

Defense, William Perry, said, it is "defense by other means." Much like preventive medicine, which creates the conditions which support and improve health, make disease less likely and surgery unnecessary, arms control creates the conditions which support peace and make war less likely. Successful arms control initiatives in Northeast Asia not only increase the security of the United States, but can also lead to increased cooperation and confidence among the nations of the region.

One of our major arms control challenges is convincing China to more fully embrace arms control as a normal component of its national security. It is deeply in the interest of the United States to build a broad and deep arms control relationship with China because it is an indispensable player if arms control is truly to be effective. As a militarily and technically advanced country it can either foster or help restrain proliferation. China's position on nonproliferation and arms control profoundly affects the behavior of other countries in South Asia, the Middle East and the Asian region as a whole. President Clinton stressed the importance his Administration places on relations with China when he said: "We must pursue a deeper dialogue with China -- for the sake of our interests and our ideas. An isolated China is not good for America. A China playing its proper role in the world is. I will go to China, and I have invited China's President to come here, not because we agree on everything, but because engaging China is the best way to work on our common challenges like ending nuclear testing, and to deal frankly with our fundamental differences like human rights."

Historically, Beijing has been highly skeptical of arms control. In this decade, however, China has accepted that arms control can advance its interests. China acceded to the Nuclear Nonproliferation

Treaty (NPT) in 1992, became a signatory to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) in 1993, and in 1996, China was one of the first nations to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). Beijing has also committed itself to abide by the guidelines and restrictions of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), thus agreeing not to export ballistic missiles capable of reaching a range of 300 kilometers with a payload of 500 kilograms. China has also expressed support for negotiating a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT), an important goal of the Clinton Administration. China has also come to embrace confidence-building measures (CBMs) as a means to assuage the concerns of its neighbors. In the past several years, Beijing has signed various levels of CBMs and troop reduction agreements with Russia, India, Vietnam and some Central Asian states. Last but not least, Beijing helped to create an environment that led to the 1994 U.S.-North Korean Agreed Framework, a topic I will return to shortly.

Despite the recent progress by China in its commitment to nonproliferation, some Chinese transactions remain a source of concern and continue to pose a major arms control and nonproliferation challenge to the United States. In the past, Chinese companies have sold nuclear-, missile, and chemical-related technologies to unstable regions such as the Middle East and South Asia. As the Chinese continue to modernize their military forces, there is concern that China may also engage in questionable conventional arms exports to expand its influence abroad and sustain its defense industries. The challenge facing the Clinton Administration is to cooperate with China to prevent the spread of weapons of mass destruction technology and equipment and of advanced conventional weapons, making not only Northeast Asia, but the rest of the world, safer as a result.

China and the United States share a common interest in nonproliferation and only through dialogue and discussion will we be able to narrow our differences in this area. Export controls over nuclear, missile, and chemical-related items, as well as conventional arms transfers, were a major topic on the agenda of former Secretary of State Christopher during his visit to China in November. He reported that his discussions with Chinese officials had advanced our cooperation in this area, but that more must be done to achieve our mutual goals. No doubt Secretary of State Albright will continue to emphasize this aspect of U.S.-Chinese cooperation during her stop in Beijing next week.

North Korea is the most immediate threat to stability in Northeast Asia. The Korean Peninsula remains a heavily armed area of high tension where military preparedness is intense and North Korean political intentions are difficult to determine. The United States is committed to assuring the security of South Korea and maintains 37,000 troops there to deter North Korean aggression and enhance stability.

North Korea's nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programs and ballistic missile capabilities are one reason the Korean Peninsula remains one of the most dangerous areas in the world. Arms control is one way the U.S. can reduce the threat of North Korean weapons of mass destruction and hopefully, lessen tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

One arms control initiative that has already reduced the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear program is the U.S.-North Korea Agreed Framework. I know that later panels will address the Agreed Framework in great detail, but because it is so vital to security relations in the region, I

would like to briefly discuss it here.

North Korea adhered to the NPT in 1985. However, it failed to bring its International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards agreement into force and continued to build and operate unsafeguarded nuclear facilities. Toward the end of 1991, North Korea began to take steps to convince the world that its nuclear program was peaceful. These included negotiating an NPT safeguards agreement with the IAEA and signing an agreement with South Korea that banned nuclear weapons and reprocessing and enrichment facilities on the Korean Peninsula; it also included a commitment to negotiate a bilateral inspection regime. At about the same time, the two Koreas also signed an agreement of reconciliation and non-aggression. North Korea's NPT safeguards agreement came into force in April 1992, and for a time North Korea cooperated fully with the IAEA in implementation of the agreement. North Korea revealed several nuclear facilities, including: a reactor capable of producing significant quantities of weapons-grade plutonium that began operating in 1986; a reprocessing plant; and two larger reactors under construction. However, in 1992 North Korea refused to allow the IAEA (for the first time using its special off-site inspection authority) to inspect two facilities the U.S. suspected were nuclear waste sites and subsequently in 1993 sent a letter to the U.N. Secretary-General stating its intention to withdraw from the NPT. The Security Council in June 1993 passed a resolution urging North Korea to reconsider its stated intention to withdraw from the NPT and to comply with its NPT safeguards agreement. The Security Council invited all U.N. members to support that effort, setting the stage for direct U.S.-North Korean talks.

North Korea did not withdraw from the NPT; and the U.S. and North Korea eventually agreed on

a framework to end the threat of proliferation on the Korean Peninsula. Signed on October 21, 1994, the Agreed Framework commits North Korea to:

- forgo reprocessing and eventually ship out its spent fuel from its existing 5 megawatt reactor;
- immediately freeze, and later eliminate, its entire graphite moderated reactor program under IAEA monitoring;
- remain in the NPT and ultimately allow full implementation of its safeguards agreement with the IAEA, including special inspections; and to
- begin a dialogue with South Korea on a permanent peace for the Korean Peninsula.

The Agreed Framework also provides that the U.S. will organize an international consortium to supply two light water reactors to North Korea to replace the graphite reactor program which is terminated under the Agreed Framework. Light water reactors are not optimal producers of plutonium for nuclear weapons programs and can be more effectively safeguarded than North Korea's current graphite moderated reactors. All of the Agreed Framework's steps are verifiable and when fully implemented, will defuse one of the most dangerous nuclear hot spots in the world.

While the Agreed Framework has averted a North Korean material potential for making over a dozen nuclear weapons a year, North Korea continues to pose a significant threat. In addition to its massive conventional military force, North Korea maintains extensive chemical warfare and ballistic missile capabilities. In the event of another conflict on the Korean Peninsula, the U.S. military expects North Korea to employ chemical weapons and ballistic missiles in an attempt to quickly destroy

allied defenses before the United States can provide adequate reinforcements. North Korea has had an active chemical weapons program since the 1960s and includes chemical warfare as part of its military preparedness plan, placing a high priority on military and civilian chemical defense readiness. Pyongyang has established a broad-based missile industry, and continues to develop and produce a variety of missiles for its own use and for export -- it possesses several hundred SCUD missiles with ranges from 300 - 500 km, which it has sold to countries such as Syria and Iran, and is in the late stages of developing the new 1,000 km NODONG missile. Although North Korea is an active supplier of missiles and related technology, it has not yet become a supplier of nuclear, chemical, or biological warfare-related technology. A major challenge for the U.S. will be to reduce the threat of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction capability and ensure that it does not spread this dangerous technology.

One way the U.S. can do this is by strengthening global norms of nonproliferation. We saw how important the NPT was in addressing North Korea's nuclear program. It was the NPT that brought to North Korea the international inspectors who first confirmed signs of a possible nuclear weapons program there. And it was the NPT that allowed us to raise the prospect of global sanctions, through the UN Security Council, if North Korea failed to meet its obligations.

Like the NPT, another important tool that would help the United States protect its security interests in the region is the Chemical Weapons Convention, which will ban the stockpiling, production and transfer of chemical weapons and contains the most comprehensive verification regime ever negotiated. I'm sure you are all aware of the current controversy surrounding the CWC on Capitol

Hill, but I would like to address one of the assertions of this treaty's critics, since it bears directly on the region this conference is addressing.

One of the most oft-heard criticisms of the CWC is that rogue states like North Korea have no intention of signing the treaty, and that therefore, the United States should not, either. I find this to be a most unconvincing argument. The United States is already committed under laws passed by Congress in 1985 and 1992 to destroying all of its chemical weapons. As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili testified, "Desert Storm proved that retaliation in kind is not required to deter the use of chemical weapons . . . Our ability to deter the use of chemical weapons in a post-Cold War world will be predicated upon a robust chemical weapons-defense protection program and the ability to rapidly bring to bear superior and overwhelming force in retaliation against a chemical attack...". Since the U.S. has already decided to destroy its own chemical weapons, the rationale that we should refrain from ratifying the CWC because a few nations may continue to pursue them is illogical. The CWC will make it harder for those countries to acquire the ingredients they need for chemical weapons. The CWC was also specifically designed to punish those countries who choose to flout the international norm against chemical weapons. They will be subject to extensive restrictions on their chemical trade -- restrictions which will also apply to our own chemical industry if the United States does not become a part of the CWC regime.

If the U.S. does not join the CWC, we will be adopting the position of rogue states such as North Korea as our own, damaging our credibility as an international leader in the process. In the words of retired General Norman Schwarzkopf, "by not ratifying the treaty, we align ourselves with nations

like Libya and North Korea, and I'd just as soon not be associated with those thugs...". If the United States does not join the CWC, we are in effect, legitimizing the possession of chemical weapons by states like North Korea.

I should also note that the situation on the Korean Peninsula illustrates another dubious claim by the CWC's opponents: that if the U.S. signs the treaty, our military will become overconfident and will downgrade training and protection against chemical weapons. Although General Shalikashvili is confident the CWC will decrease the likelihood of U.S. troops having to face chemical weapons in battle, having testified that "the nonproliferation aspect of the Convention will retard the spread of chemical weapons, and in so doing reduce the probability that U.S. forces may encounter chemical weapons in a regional conflict," it is inconceivable that any U.S. commander in South Korea would ignore the potential threat of a North Korean chemical attack. Arms control is a complement, not a replacement, for protection against chemical weapons.

As mentioned earlier, China has already signed and ratified the CWC, but is waiting for the U.S. to ratify the CWC before depositing its instrument of ratification and becoming a Party. If the U.S. does not ratify the treaty, then China may choose to retain its own chemical weapons. Even if the Chinese joined the CWC regime, U.S. personnel would not be able to pursue concerns about compliance via inspections unless we too, became party to the treaty.

Due to time constraints, and since this conference is about Northeast Asia, not chemical weapons, I will not discuss the other so-called "fatal flaws" of the CWC, but I would like to emphasize that

the CWC would only enhance U.S. security in this region and give us another important tool for pursuing our arms control and nonproliferation goals with respect to both North Korea and China.

Although I have focused on China and North Korea, I do not mean to imply that these two countries are the only in Northeast Asia that should be of interest. However, they are the two nations that pose the greatest security challenge to the U.S. in the region and carry the greatest opportunity for arms control to make a contribution to security and stability.

The Korean Peninsula will remain of vital interest to the U.S. for the indefinite future. As President Clinton has said, "Let our progress there not mask the peril that remains." Peace talks between North and South Korea must advance so that we can, in President Clinton's words, "bridge the Cold War's last divide," and any such talks must include some type of arms control agreement.

Given the broad range of mutual interests between the United States and China, the Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, John Holum, consults regularly with senior Chinese officials and led an interagency delegation to Beijing last October for wide-ranging talks on arms control issues. We expect this dialogue will continue on a regular basis and lead to an increased understanding and closer U.S.-China cooperation on arms control matters.

As China continues to modernize and become more active as a world power, arms control will become increasingly important, especially as the U.S. and Russia reduce their own arsenals. Arms control played an important role during the Cold War in building confidence and lowering

suspicions, and could have similar effects upon U.S.-China relations.

Another area that I do not have time to discuss in great detail is our active support for multi-lateral arms control efforts in Northeast Asia in particular and the Asia Pacific in general. For now, we only have the Track II Northeast Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) process for multi-lateral arms control engagement among the states of this region. We would like to see that process elevated to the Track I government-to-government level. In the East Asian region as a whole, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and its Track II complementary body, the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP), are vital to promoting dialogue on arms control and the establishment of confidence-building measures and possibly more formal arms control agreements specifically tailored to this region.

Of course, the United States has other important interests in Northeast Asia besides arms control, for example, trade, human rights, and the environment. Even within the relatively narrow field of arms control, there are several issues that I have not covered, and several important aspects of regional security, such as Taiwan, or U.S.-Japan relations, are worthy of their own seminars. I expect that the many fine speakers we will hear at this meeting will address some of these issues in great detail. Northeast Asia is a region of vital interest to the United States and is a place where we must employ all the national security tools available -- including arms control and non-proliferation initiatives -- to help ensure the peace.