

Senator Thad Cochran

**Governmental Affairs Subcommittee on International Security,
Proliferation, and Federal Services**

**"The National Intelligence Estimate on the Ballistic
Missile Threat to the United States"**

February 9, 2000

OPENING STATEMENT

Welcome to our hearing today on the National Intelligence Estimate of the ballistic missile threat to the United States.

Last year, Congress passed and the President signed the National Missile Defense Act, which officially stated the policy of the United States to be the deployment, as soon as technologically possible, of a national missile defense system, effective against a limited ballistic missile attack.

We are aware that several nations, which may not be impressed with our overwhelming missile forces, are working hard to build long-range ballistic missiles.

North Korea is one example. In August of 1998, North Korea launched a three stage Taepo Dong-1 ballistic missile. This missile demonstrated that despite the economic difficulties and isolation of North Korea, it has made impressive progress in developing a multi-stage ballistic missile capable of flying to intercontinental ranges.

North Korea appears ready to test its more capable Taepo Dong-2 at any time; Iran has already tested a medium-range ballistic missile and has begun developing longer-range weapons.

These worrisome developments reflect not just a determination by rogue states to acquire ballistic missiles, but the increasing availability of the technology required to develop these weapons. Recent assessments make clear that one factor enabling rogue states to acquire ballistic missiles is the continuing flow of missile technology from Russia, China and North Korea.

Of even greater concern is the fact that traditional importers of ballistic missile technology are now becoming suppliers. CIA Director Tenet testified just last week that "Iran's existence as a secondary supplier of this technology to other countries is the trend that worries me the most." More suppliers will create greater opportunities for proliferation in the future.

In September of last year, the Intelligence Community released a new estimate projecting the likely course of the threat, the unclassified summary of which is the subject of today's hearing.

Mr. Robert Walpole, the Intelligence Community's National Intelligence Officer for Strategic and Nuclear Programs, oversaw the formulation of the National Intelligence Estimate and will be our first witness. Mr. Walpole will be followed by a panel of two non-governmental witnesses who will provide their views on the estimate. Dr. William Schneider, an Adjunct Fellow at the Hudson Institute, previously served as Under Secretary of State for Security Assistance and was a member of the Rumsfeld Commission, and Mr. Joseph Cirincione is the Director of the Non-Proliferation Project at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

I'd like to emphasize that all discussion in our hearing today will be confined to the unclassified summary of the National Intelligence Estimate.