

Statement on H Res 1382

Expressing sympathy to the families of those killed by North Korea in the sinking of the Republic of Korea Ship Cheonan, and solidarity with the Republic of Korea in the aftermath of this tragic incident.

May 25, 2010

I rise in opposition to this legislation not because I do not wish to express sympathy to those killed in the recent sinking of a South Korean naval vessel near the border with North Korea, but rather because I object strongly to the threatening and militaristic language in this resolution. I do not believe Congressional expressions of sympathy for those who have lost their lives should include language that further escalates an already volatile situation on the Korean peninsula. At a time when the United States maintains nearly 30,000 troops in South Korea, serving as a tripwire for an American response should hostilities break out between North and South, this resolution should, if anything, counsel caution and diplomacy rather than urge the US government "to take other appropriate actions in response to the sinking of the ROKS Cheonan and other hostile acts of North Korea." Further, in reaffirming the United States' "enduring commitment to the...security of the Republic of Korea," this resolution signals a US willingness to commit military force should the current escalation in tensions continue between North and South.

It is difficult to imagine a more dangerous or inappropriate time for such statements. I believe this unfortunate incident should instead serve as a wake-up call for the United States to re-assess its military presence in South Korea in particular and Asia in general. Maintaining the US global empire is costing us one trillion dollars per year and is undermining rather than contributing to peace and stability. The North and South Koreans have all the incentive to reach a peaceful solution to their long-standing conflict and have made strides recently in that direction. The US military presence in South Korea some 50 years after the Korean War is an impediment to that progress and should be ended immediately.