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Washington, D.C. — Today, Congressman Duncan Hunter, a member of the House Armed Services Committee, made the following statement regarding the death of Kim Jong-il:

"Kim Jong-il was an oppressive leader who forced his own people to live in poverty and devoid of basic rights. With his death, there's new opportunity for North Korea, but it's unlikely to drive the changes that are necessary to forge a new relationship with the U.S. and other countries around the world."

"This is definitely a delicate time and the concerns that applied to Kim Jong-il are now shifting to his son, who's somewhat of an unknown quantity. It's expected that he'll be looking to establish credibility with the military hierarchy that controls nearly every aspect of the country. There's no independent judiciary, no real business community and no example of decency, but there are memories of Kim Jong-il and the legacy of a totalitarian regime he left behind. This is definitely a time for other players in the region to step up and influence change for all North Koreans.

And for the U.S., as diplomacy continues taking center stage, it's also a reminder of the importance of maintaining a presence in the region and ensuring we are prepared for any threat that might develop."