To the Editor, Dominion Post, Wellington

Mike Doig (12 Dec) raises an inevitable question about North Korea’s satellite. Although it does spend a fair proportion of its meagre foreign exchange earnings on imports of food, clearly more could be bought if it did not develop satellites and rockets. However, that would only provide temporary relief, and not address the underlying issues. The launch has a number of objectives, competing with the South’s attempted satellite launches being one. In particular, the military implications of the successful satellite launch will send a message to the US. North Korea has for decades been attempting to push America into accepting peaceful coexistence, and nuclear tests and rocket development are part of that strategy. Peace would mean the lifting of US-led sanctions, allowing North Korea access to international financial institutions, and the removal of military threat. In those circumstances North Korea would be able to attract more foreign investment and expand exports, import more food and fertiliser, thus moving back to economic health. This strategy might not work, because many in Washington see tension in Korea essential to the containment of China. Hopefully President Obama will now realise that North Korea will not be cowed and will accept peaceful coexistence.

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Published 14 December 2012 under the heading ‘NK sends signal to Washington’

Note: The letter from Mike Doig was in response to that of Rev Don Borrie, published 10 December 2012.

Mr Doig wrote: ‘It doesn’t seem to have occurred to The Rev Don Borrie that if North Korea stopped building expensive rockets, it mightn’t have to beg for emergency food aid.’