

# North Korea tests missile as US deploys third aircraft carrier

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South Korea reported at 5.39 a.m. today that North Korea fired what is believed to have been a short-range ballistic missile some 450 kilometres toward Japan. Japanese authorities claimed that the projectile came down in the sea within Japan's exclusive economic zone.

Japanese chief cabinet secretary Yoshide Suga told news agencies that Tokyo "cannot tolerate repeated provocations."

The newly formed South Korean government of President Moon Jae-in held an emergency meeting of the national security council within hours. Its military Joint Chiefs of Staff issued a press release declaring that its forces are "maintaining full preparedness" for the possibility of war.

North Korea's missile launch was preceded by a test on May 28 of an anti-aircraft system, which was reportedly watched in person by its leader Kim Jong-un. On May 21, his regime tested a suspected medium-range missile, which also came down in the Sea of Japan.

The North Korean actions follow a series of diplomatic and military steps by the Trump administration, backed by allies regionally and internationally, that can only have heightened fears within the Pyongyang regime of the possibility of an all-out US-led attack.

At an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council on May 23, the US, Britain and France denounced North Korea and demanded increased economic sanctions to force it into abandoning its nuclear and missile programs.

In a press conference on May 26 after bilateral talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, before the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Italy, Trump asserted that North Korea was "a big problem. It's a world

problem and it will be solved." In a threatening tone, he repeated: "At some point, it will be solved. You can bet on that."

The G7 as a whole—which consists of Britain, France, Germany, Italy and Canada, as well as the US and Japan—endorsed this menacing rhetoric. Its communiqué on May 27 declared North Korea was a "threat to world peace" and demanded that Pyongyang "immediately and fully comply with all relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions and abandon all nuclear and ballistic missile programs in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner."

The US military has made several threatening announcements alongside the diplomatic demands for Pyongyang's total capitulation to the dictates of US imperialism.

On May 26, the Pentagon announced it will carry out a missile defence test this Tuesday, simulating the intercept and destruction of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) fired at the US by North Korea. Such a test has not been carried out since mid-2014.

The same day, US Pacific Command (PACOM) revealed that the aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and its battle group will leave port on the American west coast on June 1 bound for the Sea of Japan. The Nimitz will operate in the western Pacific for six months and is being deployed ostensibly to replace the USS Carl Vinson battle group which is currently operating in waters off the Korean Peninsula. The Japan-based USS Ronald Reagan has also put to sea.

When the Nimitz arrives around mid-June, the US Navy will therefore have three aircraft carrier battle groups in the region, capable of unleashing devastating firepower from aircraft, missile-guided destroyers and ballistic missile submarines—not to mention submarines armed with nuclear missiles.

In South Korea, the US and South Korean air forces are continuing daily exercises involving dozens of jet fighters and ground-attack aircraft.

The most ominous statements over recent days, however, have been made by retired US military leaders and by Defense Secretary General James Mattis.

On May 23, four former PACOM commanders—Admiral Dennis C. Blair, Admiral Timothy J. Keating, Admiral Samuel Locklear and Admiral Joseph W. Prueher—were the panel of a National Committee on US-China Relations meeting in New York.

Discussing whether the purported threat posed by North Korea could be dealt with militarily, Keating stated: “There are a wide range of options... all of them are classified so we can’t go into them here, but you should know that there are a wide range of options available to the president and secretary of defense, resident in the planning warrens of Pacific Command.”

Locklear added: “Just because it’s tragic [war on North Korea] doesn’t mean he [Trump] won’t do it.... I think this is the mistake Kim Jong-un needs really to think about... That regime needs to be very careful, and the partners in the region who need to help manage expectations in North Korea and the outcome, need to be aware how fast this thing has changed over time. And it could be tragic.”

A range of strategic analysts predict that casualties in a second Korean War could run into the hundreds of thousands just in 24 hours.

In an interview on May 28 with CBS News, Mattis made chilling remarks. “A conflict in North Korea,” he stated, “would be probably the worst kind of fighting in most people’s lifetime.” He highlighted the North Korean artillery that is positioned within range of the South Korean capital Seoul, whose greater metropolitan area has a population some 25 million.

The bottom line,” he said, “is it would be a catastrophic war if this turns into combat, if we’re not able to resolve this situation through diplomatic means.”

Mattis was asked by CBS’s John Dickerson: “What is the line in North Korea? That if the regime crosses that line, in your view, the US should take action?”

The defense secretary replied: “I’d prefer not to answer that question, John. The president needs

political manoeuvre on this issue. We do not draw red lines unless we intend to carry them out. We’ve made very clear that we’re willing to work with China and we believe China has tried to be helpful in this regard.”

A pretext is being carefully scripted in Washington to justify a devastating pre-emptive war on North Korea. The scenario that will be outlined to the American people and the world is that the Chinese government proved incapable of reining in a rogue regime in Pyongyang and action had to be taken because North Korea was on the verge of acquiring the capacity to launch nuclear attacks on the continental United States.

A second Korean War, however, as Admiral Keating indicated last week, has been under continuous planning, update and review by US Pacific Command for decades. Its immediate aim would be the overthrow of the Pyongyang regime and occupation of the North with US-backed South Korean forces. The objective has always been to drastically alter the balance of forces in North East Asia, by eliminating North Korea as a buffer between China and the US and its allies.

The greatest danger in the situation is that a decision will be taken by US imperialism to once again try and use war to push back against the strategic challenges it faces in Europe, the Middle East and Asia, and to divert from its immense internal political, economic and social crises.



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