

Trump slams China over North Korean missile

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US President Donald Trump has lashed out at China following North Korea's long-range missile test last Friday, accusing Beijing of failing to force Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear and missile programs.

In his tweets yesterday, Trump declared that he was "very disappointed in China," stating that they made "hundreds of billions of dollars a year in trade, yet they do NOTHING for us with North Korea, just talk." In a menacing warning, he added: "We will no longer allow this to continue."

For months, Washington has been pressuring Beijing to impose crippling sanctions on North Korea as a means of bullying it to accept US demands. Trump's impatient tweets are another sign that the White House is actively considering far more aggressive methods, including military strikes against North Korea.

The danger of the US taking reckless action on the Korean Peninsula is heightened by the acute political crisis engulfing the Trump administration, highlighted by the sacking of the president's chief of staff last Friday and the installation of former general, John Kelly, previously head of Homeland Security, in the post. An attack on North Korea would serve to distract attention from the internal turmoil within the White House over allegations of collusion with Russian officials during the presidential election campaign.

In a show of force, the Pentagon flew two strategic B-1 bombers over the Korean Peninsula yesterday as part of joint war games with Japanese and South Korean fighter jets. The fly-over followed a live fire exercise on Friday by the American and South Korean militaries, including the firing of missiles into the sea.

Commander of the US Pacific Air Forces, General Terrence O'Shaughnessy, reinforced the message sent by the B-1 bombers. He warned that the United States and its allies were ready to "respond with rapid, lethal,

and overwhelming force at a time and place of our choosing."

The US also conducted another test of its Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) anti-ballistic missile system over the weekend, shooting down a target missile launched in Alaska. Following the North Korean missile launch, South Korea dropped its objections and gave the green light for the full deployment of a US THAAD battery in its territory.

US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, dismissed suggestions that the US was going to call an emergency session of the UN Security Council—as it did after North Korea first tested its long-range missile on July 4. She said it was pointless as long as China refused to commit to increasing pressure on North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

"In fact," Haley said, "it is worse than nothing, because it sends the message to the North Korean dictator that the international community is unwilling to seriously challenge him. China must decide whether it is finally willing to take this final step. The time for talk is over."

Haley made clear that if China refused to bully North Korea into submission, the US would act militarily. Earlier, she retweeted a photo of the B-1 bombers flying over the Korean Peninsula to reinforce the warning.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson blamed Russia as well as China for failing to take action against North Korea. He branded Moscow and Beijing as the "principal economic enablers of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile development program. China and Russia bear unique and special responsibility for this growing threat to regional and global stability."

China has already imposed heavy sanctions on North Korea in line with resolutions in the UN Security

Council, restricting the import of coal and banning the import of gold, rare earths and other minerals. The Trump administration, however, is pressing for Beijing to bring Pyongyang to its knees by cutting off oil and other essential exports to North Korea.

While imposing sanctions, the Chinese government is reluctant to impose measures that would bring about a complete economic crash, threatening an implosion of the Pyongyang regime that could be exploited by the US and its allies to intervene. Beijing has long regarded its ally North Korea as a crucial buffer on China's northern border against the United States.

The growing danger of an American attack on North Korea has been underscored by a new leaked assessment by the Pentagon's Defence Intelligence Agency that North Korea will have a "reliable, nuclear-capable" intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) as soon as next year—two years earlier than previously estimated. The revised assessment was made on the basis of the July 4 test by North Korea and prior to last Friday's launch.

After Kim Jong-un announced on January 1 that North Korea was on the brink of testing an ICBM, Trump tweeted "it won't happen." His latest tweets indicate that time is running out for a peaceful solution to the confrontation on the Korean Peninsula.

The US and international press are stepping up the drum beat of condemnation against North Korea, claiming that it is a threat to the US and the world. A constant stream of articles and commentary speculate about the means for halting North Korea's nuclear weapons—including an all-out military attack.

The propaganda barrage in the media is to whip up a climate of fear and provide the pretext for war. In reality, it is the US, not North Korea, which has waged one war after another over the past 25 years in a bid to retain its global dominance. The US threats of another, even more devastating war on the Korean Peninsula, are not primarily aimed at Pyongyang, but at Beijing, which Washington regards as the chief threat to its hegemony.

The recklessness of military action against North Korea was underscored by US Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, General Joseph Dunford who declared last week that a war on the Korean Peninsula would be "horrific" and result in "a loss of life unlike any we have experienced in our lifetimes."

The last war on the Korean Peninsula between 1950 and 1953 brought the Chinese and US militaries into direct conflict and led to the deaths of millions of military personnel and civilians. Under conditions of acute geo-political tensions, a new war could rapidly draw in the major nuclear-armed powers and have far more catastrophic consequences for humanity.



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