

# China rejects Trump's accusations over North Korea

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The Chinese government has hit back at the Trump administration over accusations that Beijing has failed to halt North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. Following last Friday's long-range missile test by Pyongyang, Trump tweeted he was "very disappointed in China." He accused Beijing of doing "NOTHING for us with North Korea" despite a huge trade surplus with the US. "We will not allow this to continue," he warned.

In unusually blunt language, an editorial this week in the state-owned Xinhua news agency declared that "emotional venting cannot become the guiding policy for solving the nuclear issue on the [Korean] peninsula." It insisted that the US "must not continue spurning responsibility" for its confrontation with North Korea and "even less should it stab China in the back."

The editorial continued: "Taking out this outrage on China is clearly finding the wrong target ... What the peninsula needs is immediately stamping out the fire, not adding kindling, or even worse, pouring oil on the flames." It warned that the tensions with North Korea could "evolve into a localised conflict, or even the outbreak of war, with unthinkable consequences."

Beijing has opposed North Korea's nuclear and missile tests, out of deep concern that the US and its regional allies, especially Japan, have used them as the pretext for a military build-up in the Asia-Pacific that is primarily aimed against China. However, while imposing the UN's tough sanctions on North Korea, China has been reluctant to accede to US demands for crippling measures. It fears that a political crisis in Pyongyang could create the conditions for Washington to launch a regime-change intervention.

China, backed by Russia, has proposed its own solution to the tense standoff: a halt by Pyongyang on

further missile and nuclear testing in return for ending joint military drills by the US and South Korea that are clearly aimed against North Korea. This would set the stage for negotiations. Washington, however, has rejected the proposal out of hand.

The Chinese ambassador to Washington, Liu Jieyi, also weighed in on Monday, declaring that while "people talk about China a lot," it was the responsibility of the US and North Korea, not China, to defuse the situation. "No matter how capable China is, China's efforts will not yield practical results because it depends on the two principal parties."

Liu said: "Instead of de-escalating tension we see of course further testing [by North Korea] that we oppose and we also see language and action from elsewhere [the US] that heightens tension, talking about 'all options on the table.'" He again criticised the US deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) battery to South Korea that could be used against China as well as North Korea.

Beijing's determination not to be bullied into tougher action against North Korea sets the stage for an escalating US confrontation not only with Pyongyang, but also China. The US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley also lashed out at China this week and ruled out an emergency session of the UN Security Council. "Done talking about North Korea," she tweeted. "China is aware they must act."

Following the North Korean missile test, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson branded China and Russia as the "principal economic enablers of North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile development program" despite both countries implementing UN sanctions against North Korea.

Russia joined China in rejecting the accusation. The Russian foreign ministry stated: "We view as

groundless attempts undertaken by the US and a number of other countries to shift responsibility to Russia and China, almost blaming Moscow and Beijing for indulging the missile and nuclear ambitions of the DPRK [North Korea].”

Tillerson struck a somewhat more conciliatory note yesterday, not toward Russia and China, but toward North Korea. “We do not seek a regime change, we do not seek a collapse of the regime, we do not seek an accelerated reunification of the peninsula, we do not seek an excuse to send our military north of the 38th Parallel [dividing the two Koreas],” he said.

Tillerson held out the prospect of talks, on the condition that Pyongyang recognised “there is no future where North Korea holds nuclear weapons or the ability to deliver those nuclear weapons to anyone in the region, much less the [US] homeland.” He again urged China to take action, warning that other options—namely military ones—were “not particularly attractive.”

Pyongyang has no reason to believe Tillerson’s declarations. “Regime-change” in North Korea, whether stated or unstated, has been the policy of successive US administrations since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. North Korea’s nuclear and missile programs will do nothing to defend the country’s population against US attack and its belligerent threats play directly into US hands. Nevertheless, Pyongyang has every reason to fear that Washington is seeking to remove its leaders, one way or another.

Tillerson’s remarks are directly contradicted by those of CIA director Mike Pompeo, who strongly hinted at last month’s Aspen Security Forum that plans were being laid to eliminate North Korean leader Kim Jong-un. The problem, Pompeo stated, was not North Korea’s nuclear weapons as such, but “the character who holds control over them.” He was “confident that the intelligence community will present ... a wide range of options for the president” to “separate those two”—that is, remove Kim and the North Korean leadership.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham yesterday underlined the Trump administration’s preparedness to carry out military strikes. Speaking on the NBC’s “Today” program, he said Trump had told him he was willing to go to war with North Korea “if they

continued to try to hit America with an ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile].”

Graham continued: “He’s told me that. I believe him ... There is a military option: To destroy North Korea’s program and North Korea itself. I prefer the diplomatic approach. But they will not be allowed to have a missile to hit America with a nuclear weapon on top.”

After the North Korean missile test, the Pentagon put on a show of military force—carrying out a joint live-fire exercise with the South Korean armed forces last weekend, followed by a fly-over of the Korean Peninsula by two B-1 strategic bombers on Sunday.

Today the US is preparing to test launch its own ICBM from the Vandenberg Air Force Base in California to “validate and verify the effectiveness, readiness and accuracy of the weapon system.” And—one should add—to demonstrate the ability of the US with its huge nuclear arsenal to reduce North Korea to ashes in a matter of hours.

For all the lurid media claims about the “nuclear threat” posed by North Korea, it is US imperialism that waged wars of aggression for the past quarter century, devastating one country after another in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia.



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