

Trump threatens North Korea with war

Peter Symonds
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US President Donald Trump has again threatened to take military action against North Korea following its test firing of an intermediate range missile yesterday that flew over Japan. He warned, in a statement yesterday, that “all options are on the table.” Trump condemned Pyongyang’s actions as “threatening and destabilising” and contemptuous of the UN, its neighbours and the “minimum standards of acceptable international behaviour.”

Trump’s comments effectively negated his remarks last week and those of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson suggesting that talks with Pyongyang might be possible. In a highly qualified comment, the US president had told a rally in Arizona that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un was “starting to respect us,” adding: “Maybe, probably not, something positive will come out of it.”

Earlier this month, Trump deliberately inflamed the extremely tense situation on the Korean Peninsula by declaring that North Korea would face “fire and fury like the world has never seen” if it continued to threaten the United States. Far from resiling from this unprecedented threat of nuclear war, Trump followed it up by declaring that the military options against Pyongyang were “locked and loaded.”

US allies—particularly Japan, South Korea and Australia—have roundly condemned the latest missile launch, greatly exaggerating the threat posed. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe branded it “an outrageous act that poses an unprecedented, grave and serious threat.” The media in the US and internationally followed suit, declaring it “an unprecedented provocation” (the *Australian*) and “the most aggressive step ... in almost 20 years” (*Financial Times*).

North Korea’s missile tests only further fuel an already highly dangerous situation and do nothing to defend its people from a US-led attack. But the chief responsibility for putting Asia and the world on the

brink of nuclear war lies with Washington. Having systematically isolated North Korea for decades, the US under Trump, following on from Barack Obama, has greatly escalated punitive sanctions on Pyongyang, designed to cripple its economy and force it to bow to US dictates.

Fearing the consequences of capitulating completely, the Pyongyang regime is recklessly using its limited nuclear arsenal in a bid to ward off a conflict with US imperialism, the most powerful military force on the face of the planet that has attacked, invaded and intervened in one country after another over the past 25 years. Pyongyang’s belligerent threats and actions, however, only play into the hands of Washington, which has exploited North Korea as the pretext to justify a massive military build-up in the Asia-Pacific in preparation for war with China.

Following yesterday’s missile launch, the US joined Japan in pushing for an emergency session of the UN Security Council, which convened on Tuesday afternoon (New York time). After four hours of talks, the UN body issued a statement condemning North Korea’s “outrageous actions,” branding them “not just a threat to the region but to all UN member states.”

Earlier, US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, denounced North Korea’s actions as “absolutely unacceptable and irresponsible” and declared “something serious has to happen.” No doubt, the US and its allies will demand even tougher sanctions on top of those imposed earlier this month that slashed North Korea’s already limited exports by one third.

It is unlikely that the UN Security Council even considered a request by North Korea for a discussion on the threat posed by major US-South Korean joint military exercises, dubbed Ulchi Freedom Guardian, involving tens of thousands of troops and hi-tech military hardware. In a letter on Monday, North Korea’s ambassador to the UN, Ja Song Nam, accused

the US of staging “a provocative and aggressive joint military exercise at this critical moment of the Korean Peninsula, where the situation is just like a time bomb.”

The US and South Korea promote the fiction that their war games are strictly defensive in character. However, in November 2015, the two militaries adopted a joint operational plan, OPLAN 5015, that abandoned a nominally defensive strategy in favour of pre-emptive strikes on North Korean military and industrial targets and “decapitation raids” to kill top North Korean leaders.

The South Korean newspaper *Chosun Ilbo* reported yesterday that President Moon Jae-in had pressed the military to formulate new war plans that “could quickly switch to an offensive posture in case North Korea stages a provocation that crosses the line or attacks the capital region.” A military source told the newspaper that the gist of the plan is “the mobilisation of airborne troops and Marines to infiltrate Pyongyang to quickly bring down the North Korean regime.”

The war plan envisages a major South Korean attack on North Korea without waiting for the US to assemble warships, military aircraft and massive troop reinforcements, but the Pentagon and the White House are undoubtedly intimately involved in the planning. In the event of a war with North Korea, the US automatically assumes operational control of South Korean military forces. The newspaper said the strategy envisages air and missile strikes on more than 1,000 North Korean targets, as well as the assassination of North Korean leaders.

In a provocative show of “overwhelming force” yesterday, President Moon ordered four F-15K fighter jets to drop eight one-tonne bunker busters near the border with North Korea. “Our Air Force will wipe out the leadership of the North Korean regime with the strong strike capability if it threatens the security of our people and the South Korea-US alliance with nuclear weapons and missiles,” the leader of the mission told the media.

Moreover, when Trump warns that “all options” are on the table that includes the “fire and fury” option—the use of nuclear weapons. Last week he boasted the US was spending “vast amounts” on “our nuclear arsenal and missile defence” to ensure American predominance in a nuclear war. At the same time, the Air Force announced major contracts to develop a stealthy

nuclear cruise missile and new intercontinental ballistic missiles. Earlier this month, the Air Force conducted a second flight test of a new gravity nuclear bomb.

China is deeply fearful of a war erupting on its doorstep in the Korean Peninsula. Along with Russia, it has pushed for a “double freeze”—a halt to US-South Korean war games in return for a suspension of North Korea’s nuclear and missile tests—as a means for starting negotiations to end the confrontation. The US has flatly rejected any halt to its joint military exercises in South Korea.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying appealed for both sides to abide by UN resolutions that call for the relevant parties to “not act to provoke each other and exacerbate tensions in the region.” She said Beijing believed the situation was “now at a tipping point approaching a crisis.”

Trump’s threats of military action, combined with the rising propaganda campaign in the American and international media vilifying North Korea, all suggest that the US and its allies are preparing for war.



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