

As US threatens North Korea, NATO chief warns of “more dangerous world”

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While the US continued to provocatively intensify tensions with North Korea, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg joined the chorus of condemnation against Pyongyang over its sixth nuclear test on September 3.

Speaking to the BBC yesterday, Stoltenberg denounced North Korea’s “reckless behavior” as “a global threat” that “requires a global response and that of course also includes NATO.” While saying he would not speculate on whether NATO members would be required to join a war against North Korea if the US were attacked, he did not rule it out.

Stoltenberg told the *Guardian* on Friday the world was “more dangerous” than at any time in his 30-year career. “It is more unpredictable, and it’s more difficult because we have so many challenges at the same time,” he said, pointing to “weapons of mass destruction in North Korea,” as well as terrorism and “a more assertive Russia.”

The NATO chief was visiting British troops stationed in Estonia, having toured NATO battle groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. He claimed the troops were in “defensive” mobilisation as Russia and Belarus prepared for large-scale military exercises this week. In reality, Washington’s military push into Eastern Europe via NATO is fueling a confrontation with Russia.

Similarly, US President Donald Trump, following on from the Obama administration, has dramatically heightened tensions with North Korea, threatening last month to engulf it in “fire and fury like the world has never seen.” In response, the Pyongyang regime has concluded that its only means of preventing a US attack is to develop a nuclear arsenal as quickly as possible.

Speaking to the BBC yesterday, British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon hinted the UK could become involved in a US-led war against North Korea, saying

the country could pose a threat to London. “This involves us,” he said, because “London is closer to North Korea and its missiles than Los Angeles.” He admitted that North Korean missiles could not reach the UK, but said their range was getting “longer and longer.”

While emphasising the need for a “diplomatic solution,” Fallon insisted: “We have to get this program halted because the dangers now of miscalculation, of some accident triggering a response, are extremely great.” If attacked, the US “of course, under the United Nations, has the right to ask other members of the United Nations to join in its self-defence.”

The danger of catastrophic war in Asia is provoking deep fears in Europe and exacerbating divisions with Washington. In an interview published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung* on Sunday, German Chancellor Angela Merkel suggested that the deal struck in 2015 with Iran to limit its nuclear program might form the basis for negotiations with North Korea. “Europe and especially Germany should be prepared to play a very active part in that,” she said.

Merkel’s proposal of an Iran-type deal with North Korea will not be welcome in Washington. Trump has repeatedly denounced the agreement with Iran, threatened to pull out of it, and dismissed the possibility of a negotiated end to the standoff with North Korea.

Washington has ratcheted up pressure on China and Russia to agree to a new US resolution to be discussed in the UN Security Council today. The resolution is expected to include a full embargo on oil exports to North Korea, as well as a partial naval blockade that would give UN member states the right to board and inspect ships suspected of breaking sanctions.

China and Russia are expected to oppose a complete oil export ban, which would precipitate an economic and political crisis in Pyongyang. Beijing and Moscow fear that the US and its allies would exploit any breakdown in North Korea to instal a pro-US regime in their backyard.

Last Thursday, Trump declared that US presidents had been “talking, talking, talking” with North Korea for 25 years, but its nuclear program had continued. “So I would prefer not going the route of the military, but it’s something certainly that could happen,” he warned.

Trump boasted that “our military has never been stronger.” In another threat to North Korea, he stated: “Each day new equipment is delivered—new and beautiful equipment, the best in the world, the best anywhere in the world, by far. Hopefully we’re not going to have to use it on North Korea. If we do use it on North Korea, it will be a very sad day for North Korea.”

Based on senior White House and Pentagon officials, NBC News reported last Friday that the Trump administration was “readying a package of diplomatic and military moves against North Korea, including cyberattacks and increased surveillance and intelligence operations.”

Trump was also “seriously considering adopting diplomatically risky sanctions on Chinese banks doing business with Pyongyang” and “not ruling out moving tactical nuclear weapons to South Korea should Seoul request them.” South Korea’s defence minister last week suggested the US could place tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea.

Not only would such a move end US claims to be seeking to denuclearise the Korean Peninsula, but greatly heighten the danger of nuclear war, through accident or miscalculation.

According to NBC, the White House had reviewed the full gamut of options, including attacking North Korea with nuclear weapons. The article stated: “A first use of nuclear weapons would be extremely aggressive and lack support domestically or among international allies, the senior administration official said.”

“We talk about all kinds of crazy stuff we never do,” the official told NBC. “Then you know why you rule it out.” No one should accept such assurances. The very fact that a nuclear first strike on North Korea is being

discussed indicates it is under active consideration. Washington’s constant mantra that “all options are on the table” shows that nothing is ruled out in a US attack on North Korea.

NBC also reported that China warned Trump administration officials that if the US struck North Korea first, Beijing would back Pyongyang. If North Korea hit a US target, however, that “changes everything,” a senior administration official said. In other words, if the Trump administration can goad North Korea into making a military move with its provocative threats and actions, China might stay on the sideline.

This situation highlights the extraordinary recklessness of the US administration. As it prepares for war with North Korea, the US government knows full well that it could rapidly come into conflict with China, which it regards as the chief obstacle to global American dominance.



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