

# Trump Threatens ‘Fire and Fury’ Against North Korea if It Endangers U.S.

BRIDGEWATER, N.J. — President Trump threatened on Tuesday to unleash “fire and fury” against North Korea if it endangers the United States as tensions with the isolated nuclear-armed state grow into perhaps the most serious foreign policy challenge yet in his young administration.

“North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States,” Mr. Trump told reporters at his golf club in Bedminster, N.J. “They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen. He has been very threatening beyond a normal state and as I said they will be met with fire and fury and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before.”

The president’s comments came as North Korea earlier in the day escalated its criticism of the United States, as well as its neighboring allies, by warning that it will mobilize all its resources to take “physical action” in retaliation against the latest round of United Nations sanctions.

The statement, carried by the North’s state-run Korean Central News Agency, was the strongest indication yet that the country could conduct another nuclear or missile test, as it had often done in response to past United Nations sanctions. Until now, the North’s response to the latest sanctions had been limited to strident yet vague warnings, such as threatening retaliation “thousands of times over.”

“Packs of wolves are coming in attack to strangle a nation,” the North Korean statement said. “They should be mindful that the D.P.R.K.’s strategic steps accompanied by physical action will be taken mercilessly with the mobilization of all its national strength.”

D.P.R.K. stands for the North’s official name, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

North Korea’s statement on Tuesday appeared to defy efforts by both Washington

and Beijing to defuse the tense situation.

On Monday, while attending a regional security meeting of foreign ministers in Manila, the United States' secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, kept the door open for talks with North Korea, suggesting that the country should stop its recent string of missile launches to set the stage for negotiations over its weapons programs. At the same venue, Foreign Minister Wang Yi of China said he told his North Korean counterpart, Ri Yong-ho, that the North should stop carrying out nuclear and missile tests.

Incensed by the North's two intercontinental ballistic missile tests last month, the United Nations Security Council adopted a new sanctions resolution over the weekend, the eighth since the country conducted its first nuclear test in 2006. Backers of the resolution said the new sanctions would cut North Korea's meager annual export revenue by about a third, impeding its ability to raise cash for its weapons programs.

President Trump praised the sanctions in a tweet on Tuesday morning. "After many years of failure, countries are coming together to finally address the dangers posed by North Korea," he said. "We must be tough & decisive!"

The sanctions ban member countries from importing coal, iron, iron ore, lead, lead ore and seafood from North Korea. They also prohibit member nations from hosting any additional workers from the North above their current levels. Washington called the restrictions "the most stringent set of sanctions on any country in a generation."

But strong doubts remain over how rigorously China and Russia, the North's two neighboring allies, will enforce the sanctions.

The sanctions also do not impair the North's ability to import oil and export clothing and textiles that its workers produce for Chinese companies, although the sanctions ban new joint ventures with North Korea and any new investment in current joint ventures. Clothing and textile exports are a leading source of foreign currency for the impoverished country.

Officials and analysts still doubt that North Korea has mastered the technology needed to deliver a nuclear payload on an intercontinental ballistic missile. But its last ICBM test, conducted on July 28, alarmed Washington and its allies by

demonstrating that missiles now could potentially reach much the continental United States.

“North Korea’s development of ballistic missiles and its nuclear program are becoming increasingly real and imminent problems for the Asia-Pacific region including Japan, as well as the rest of the world,” the Japanese government said in an annual threat assessment released on Tuesday. “It is possible that North Korea has already achieved the miniaturization of nuclear weapons and has acquired nuclear warheads.”

One of the last technical hurdles North Korea must clear is mastering the “re-entry” know-how to protect a small nuclear warhead as the missile crashes through the earth’s atmosphere.

The North’s fast-advancing missile capabilities have left its neighbors South Korea and Japan scrambling for ways to protect themselves. South Korea is racing to build up its monitoring and striking capabilities so that its radars and reconnaissance planes can track and neutralize North Korean missiles in pre-emptive attacks.

In March, a group of Japanese governing party lawmakers led by Itsunori Onodera, who became Japan’s new defense minister on Thursday, urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to consider acquiring the capability to hit enemy bases in what would be a drastic change in the country’s post-World War II pacifist defense posture, Reuters reported on Tuesday. Tokyo has so far avoided taking the controversial and costly step of acquiring bombers or cruise missiles with enough range to strike other countries.

“North Korea’s missile launches have escalated tensions both in terms of quality and quantity. I would like to study if our current missile defense is sufficient just with the Aegis destroyers and PAC-3,” the surface-to-air missile interceptors, Mr. Onodera said on Friday, according to The Associated Press.

In South Korea, some conservative politicians and analysts are calling for the reintroduction of American tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea to establish a “balance of terror” against the North. The United States withdrew all nuclear weapons from the South in the early 1990s, though it occasionally sends nuclear-capable bombers and submarines here in exercises.

On Tuesday, North Korea barely held back its disdain for its traditional allies, China and Russia, for acquiescing to American pressure to impose tougher sanctions.

“The recent sanctions resolution cooked up by the U.S. and its followers is an outcome of the horror and uneasiness of the U.S. taken aback by the might and mettle of the D.P.R.K.,” its statement said. “It is also the label of the weakness and servility of the riffraff who showed their hands in favor of adopting the resolution, as they are scared by the U.S.”

The statement did not mention China or Russia by name, only referring to “big countries” that it said abandoned their “creed, conscience and obligation” and voted for the sanctions to gain favor with President Trump.

Peter Baker reported from Bridgewater, N.J., and Choe Sang-Hun from Seoul, South Korea.

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*Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/08/world/asia/north-korea-un-sanctions-nuclear-missile-united-nations.html>*

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