North Korea fires missile over Japan

Tuesday 29 August 2017

North Korea fired a missile over Japan on Tuesday morning, the second such incident in three days.

The missile, thought to be a new intermediate-range Hwasong-12, flew over Hokkaido and landed in the Pacific about 1,180km east of the northern Japanese island.

The missile, known as the Hwasong-12, is a new intermediate-range missile.

The missile was launched from a site near the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and passed over a sparsely populated area of Hokkaido just after 6am local time (1000 GMT).

Japan's government described the launch as an "unprecedented and grave threat" to the country's security and said it would strengthen its monitoring and preparation in case of further actions from North Korea.

The JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) said it was analysing the launch with the US and also that South Korea's military had strengthened its monitoring and preparation in case of further actions from North Korea.

The public broadcaster NHK said the missile had been launched from a site near the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, and that it had passed over a sparsely populated area of Hokkaido just after 6am local time.

The missile was the third fired by North Korea to have passed over Japanese territory. The first was in 1998 and the second in 2009, although Pyongyang claims they were satellites.

"The outrageous act of firing a missile over our country is an unprecedented, serious and grave threat and greatly damages regional peace and security," Abe told reporters in Tokyo, adding that his government had protested to Pyongyang via the Japanese embassy in Beijing.

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North Korea missiles: Projectile flies over Japan

North Korea has fired a missile that flew over northern Japan before crashing into the sea.

No effort was made by the Japanese to shoot down the missile, which was launched early in the morning local time, triggering safety warnings.

The missile broke into three pieces before it landed, local media reported.

There has been a wave of North Korean missile tests but it is the first time in eight years that one has flown over Japan.

On Friday and Saturday North Korea fired three short-range missiles into the sea off its eastern coast.

Have North Korea's missile tests paid off?
What can the outside world do?
Can the US defend itself against North Korea?

As this latest missile flew towards Japan warning alarms went off across northern Japan but public broadcaster NHK said there was no sign of any damage.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said afterwards the government was doing its utmost to protect people's lives.

Skip Twitter post by @Chihokomoriya

Follow

Chiho komoriya @Chihokomoriya

Alarm from JP Gov. "A missile was fired from North Korea. Please evacuate to a sturdy building or basement." #northkorea #Japan

9:08 AM - Aug 29, 2017

4747 Replies
1,971,974 Retweets
976976 likes

Twitter Ads info and privacy
Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga described the latest test as an “unprecedented” threat. He said that Japan would take “appropriate steps” in response.

Japan is likely to see the test as a serious escalation of tensions given the missile’s flight path, the BBC’s Yogita Limaye in Seoul says.

The Pentagon said that Tuesday’s test did not represent a threat to the US and the military was now working to gather more intelligence about it.

The US and South Korea are currently engaged in joint military exercises and the North’s missile tests are often in response to them.

Thousands of troops from both countries are participating in the drills, which are mainly computer-simulated exercises.

North Korea fires three missiles into sea

The US military says that North Korea has fired three short-range ballistic missiles.

They were launched from a site in the North Korean province of Kangwon and flew for about 250km (150 miles), officials in South Korea said.

Since firing an intercontinental ballistic weapon last month, Pyongyang has threatened to aim missiles at the US Pacific territory of Guam.

But this latest test did not threaten the US or Guam, the US military said.

North Korean missile tests often come in response to South Korean military exercises involving the US.

Thousands of US and South Korean troops are currently taking part in joint military drills, which are mainly computer-simulated exercises.

The US military initially reported that two of the missiles had failed but, according to its later assessment, one appears to have blown up almost immediately while two flew about 250km (155 miles) in a north-easterly direction.

The launches were spread over a period of 30 minutes, an official said.

The South Korean defence ministry said: “The military is keeping a tight surveillance over the North to cope with further provocations.”

The two Koreas are technically still at war as the 1950-1953 Korean War ended in an armistice.

North Korea ‘accidentally reveals’ plans for new missiles

North Korea appears to have revealed details of two as-yet untested missile systems in its press coverage of a factory inspection by the country’s Supreme Leader Kim Jong-un.

Photographs released by KCNA state news agency to go with a report on Mr Kim’s visit to a facility at the Academy of Defence Sciences facility show wall charts describing the missiles, called Hwasong-13 and Pukguksong-3.

Hwasong-13 appears to be a three-stage ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missile), while the chart showing Pukguksong-3, although largely obscured by officials, is an Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile (SLBM).

It’s not the first time that North Korea has “accidentally” left details of important developments in the background of photo-shoots, and this is seen by analysts as a means of showing off its military power or sending messages to its foes.
Timed to warn America

North Korea's report of the visit appears to be deliberately timed, coming on the third day of the Ulchi Freedom Guardian military exercises involving South Korea and the United States, to which Pyongyang is vehemently opposed.

The timing and the content is critical. Speaking to South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo newspaper, Shin Jong-woo of the Korea Defence and Security Forum said that North Korea "has a history of displaying actual weapons, or graphic designs of them, via state media in order to flaunt its military prowess to the world."

According to KCNA, Kim Jong-un is said to have ordered scientists at the facility to produce more solid rocket fuel and warhead tips missiles, and these fit with the details displayed on the wall charts.

Unlike the liquid-fuelled Hwasong-14 missile which North Korea tested in July, Hwasong-13 appears to be a three-stage solid fuel rocket; while the solid-fuelled Pukguksong-3 is a longer-range version of the Pukguksong-1 and -2 missiles which were tested in 2018.

Background details

Whether by mistake or as a ruse, it has happened before.

Two weeks ago, photos of Kim Jong-un planning a ballistic missile test in the direction of US Andersen Air Force Base on Guam also contained strategically-placed wall charts and an ominous aerial view of the base itself.

The message here is clear: Pyongyang is telling Washington that American military power in the region is in their sights. But it could all have been an "elaborate bluff," Seoul's Chosun Ilbo newspaper says.

The paper says that the aerial photo of the Guam base is six years old and publicly available on the Google Earth mapping service. North Korea has no facilities of its own to obtain satellite imagery.

The aerial view of Andersen Air Force Base is intended to send a message to Washington.

Striking the US mainland

Pyongyang has used this intimidating tactic at a time of heightened tensions before - such is the cyclical nature of North Korean crises.

Kim Jong-un was photographed in March 2013 in a meeting with notepad-wielding generals after the region appeared on the brink of war following a North Korean nuclear test the previous month.

One of the charts, placed at a convenient angle for the camera, is titled "Plan to strike the US mainland", with one of the missile plots terminating in Austin, Texas.

As an intimidation tactic though, the plan fell through - news of this threat was mostly met with mockery by Texan Twitter users, Washington Post reported at the time.

And as North Korea almost certainly did not have the technical capabilities to carry out such a strike, it would have been hard for it to carry the scheme through to completion even if it wanted to.

What Pyongyang doesn't show

While accidentally- or purposely-placed maps and charts give North Korea-watchers clues to the messages that North Korea is trying to send to the outside world, it's what Pyongyang doesn't show in its news reporting that can be just as revealing.

The omission of MiG-29 fighter jets from coverage this year's Air Force flight competition in June, an annual event given prominence due to Kim Jong-un's presence, could show that UN sanctions are biting hard at least in some parts of the country's military.

It's thought that parts and fuel for the country's most advanced jets are in short supply, and their disappearance from TV screens - which usually glory in the "invincible" strength of the armed forces - could mean that they are grounded, at least temporarily.

Communication in all its forms is tightly controlled by the government in Pyongyang, but sometimes the mask slips sufficiently to tell the world more than intended.
SEUL (Reuters) - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un ordered the production of more solid-fuel rocket engines and rocket warhead tips, the North's official media said on Wednesday in a report otherwise lacking threats against Washington after weeks of heightened tension.

A report about Kim's visit to a chemical institute came not long after U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson appeared to make a peace overture to Pyongyang, welcoming what he called the recent restraint shown by the reclusive North.

North Korea has conducted two nuclear tests and dozens of missile tests since the start of last year, significantly raising tensions on the heavily militarized Korean peninsula. Two tests of intercontinental ballistic missiles in July resulted in a new round of tougher global sanctions.

The last missile test on July 28 put the U.S. mainland in range, prompting heated exchanges that raised fears of a new conflict on the peninsula.

Tillerson, however, noted what he called the restraint the North had shown lately and said on Tuesday he hoped a path could be opening for dialogue some time in the near future.

The KCNA report said Kim had given "special thanks and special bonus" to officials of the institute, calling them heroes. A photograph showed Kim in a grey pinstriped suit, smiling before a large flow chart that described some kind of manufacturing process.

However, there was none of the fiery rhetoric of recent weeks, when Kim threatened to fire missiles into the sea near the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam after U.S. President Donald Trump earlier warned North Korea it would face "fire and fury" if it threatened the United States.

New U.S. sanctions announced on Tuesday target Chinese and Russian firms, as well as individuals, for supporting Pyongyang's weapons nuclear and missile programs.
North Korea says it won’t test-fire ballistic missiles near Guam at this time. A North Korean statement said Kim Jong Un would observe what it called ‘foolish and stupid conduct’ of the US before deciding whether to order the missiles fired.

By Debra Killalea

North Korea has amped up its war of words with the US in a chilling new video which shows Guam being targeted in a missile attack. In the video published by the Uriminzokkiri outlet, the Trump administration is warned to “keep its eyes and ears open from now on.”

The propaganda reel also shows US President Donald Trump standing in a cemetery with dozens of crosses and other officials surrounded in flames.

"The fate of the US, with its many crimes, ends here," it reads.

The video comes as the US and South Korea launch their joint Ulchi Freedom Guardian drills, an exercise seen as highly provocative by Pyongyang.

North Korea typically responds to such exercises with weapons tests, however it is unclear if that would include sending missiles in Guam’s direction.

The joint training, which follows North Korea’s two intercontinental ballistic missile tests last month, is scheduled to last for 11 days.

China called on South Korea and the US to suspend the joint military drills as the two nations began annual war games.

The drills are always met with threats of strong military counteraction.

Related articles:

US, South Korea kick off military drills

This is how nuclear world war will begin

Starving North Korea buys up food from China

The North Korean video comes days after Trump's warned of "fire and fury like the world has never seen" by threatening a missile strike on Guam.

The reclusive state said it was "carefully examining" a plan to attack Guam, but leader Kim Jong-un said he will watch the "foolish and stupid conduct of the Yankees" a little more before deciding whether to give an order for the missile test.

The latest video warns that not a single bullet has landed in its territory during 150 invasions and US is threatened by "just one announcement by the North’s commander in chief:"

According to translations cited by the Washington Post, the video shows missiles launching and warns the US it won’t know whether their rockets will harass them.

It then shows a missile hitting Guam accompanied by the caption: "If a single bullet lands in the territory of Guam, the United States’ bluffing will be revealed to the entire world as fake."
Vice President Pence, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson also get a cameo appearance, with their faces surrounded by fire.

"All North Korea needs to do is to place its hand on a button and press it when the right time comes," the video continues.

"The US will live in fear and anxiety the whole time. They will sweat so much in this hot summer weather."

Such propaganda videos are not uncommon for North Korea.

However in an interview with news.com.au last week, Dr Euan Graham, International Security Program director at the Lowy Institute, said it was important to read between the lines when it came to North Korea's aggressive statements.

War games

The start of the US and South Korea drills not only caused North Korea to react but also prompted a warning from Beijing.

China called on the two allies to suspend the joint military drills which have infuriated nuclear-armed Pyongyang.

"The current situation on the Korean peninsula is highly sensitive and fragile, which requires the directly concerned parties including South Korea and US to make joint efforts to ease the tensions," Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said.

Beijing has pleaded for a resumption of long-dormant six-nation talks to peacefully resolve the nuclear crisis. But its proposal for North Korea to suspend its arms programs in return for the United States to halt military drills in the region has so far been ignored.

"We don't think the joint exercise will be conducive to easing the current tensions. And we urge relevant parties to (seriously consider) the suspension-for-suspension proposal," Mr Hua said.
Tens of thousands of South Korean and US troops are taking part in the Ulchi Freedom Guardian joint military drills, a largely computer-simulated exercise that runs for two weeks in the South.

Around 17,500 US troops will participate in the drills - a cutback from last year.

Australia warned

The video isn't the latest provocation to come from the DPRK, the acronym used by the secretive state.

Only yesterday North Korea warned Australia has committed a 'suicidal act' by backing up US and South Korean military forces in the case of an attack.

North Korean news agency KCNA warned Australia's allegiance to the US and its decision to take part in a military drill in South Korea would come at a cost.

Last week, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull told 3AW that an ANZUS treaty would be invoked and Australia would send troops to the aid of the US “if there is an attack” on the ally, prompting an angry response from North Korea.

A rare glimpse at America's super nukes: 'hell and fury' that can reach North Korea in 30 minutes

21 Aug, 2017 8:37am
3 minutes to read

Buried deep beneath the Montana soil in America’s northwest are 150 giant Minuteman III nuclear missiles - locked, loaded and ready to go.

They are 20 times more powerful than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and can reach any target on the planet in half an hour.

They stand ready to be deployed at any moment of the day, on the order of US President Donald Trump, who this month promised North Korea a “fire and fury like the world has never seen”.

A Minuteman III missile flaming into the sky from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Lompoc, California. Photo / AP
"I think this is a very dangerous time - perhaps the most dangerous threat that we've faced since the Cuban missile crisis," former US Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta said.

Tensions between America and North Korea have been simmering for months, reaching a frightening war of words in recent weeks. The two countries have exchanged threats and counter threats over recent weeks, with the world watching nervously. And should they boil over, it's from this location that Trump’s "fire and fury" will be unleashed.

Channel Nine's 60 Minutes programme received a rare look at the nuclear facility in Montana, which is just part of the mega arsenal that serves as a deterrent.

There are countless others just like it, with some 450 "super nukes" in stockpile. It's a never-ending operation to be ready, with constant training on how to maintain and handle the weapons.

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17 Aug, 2017 4:42pm
2 minutes to read

Master sergeant Jennifer Hubner said should the call from the White House come, she and her colleagues were ready.

"None of us come to work hoping today's the day. But we hope our enemies think twice before they decide to use weapons of mass destruction against us or our allies."

That includes Australia, with Hubner declaring: "We've got your back."

Reporter Liz Hayes was granted unprecedented access to a control room 20 metres underground, where the launch of the world's most
devastating weapons would occur.

At the panel are two "missileers", inside a small concrete and steel room suspended by shock absorbers designed to withstand a nuclear blast.

"And it's always manned, with 'missileers' rotated on 24-hour shifts," Hayes explained.

The US will splash US$340 billion on nuclear weapons in the next decade to maintain its global "deterrent" against enemies like North Korea.

"No enemy can escape our missiles. None. We have the capability to hold any enemy on the planet accountable," Commander Ronald Allen said.

North Korea's dictator Kim Jong-un has ramped up his threats to attack the US but Panetta warned Australia was also at risk.

He believes the Federal Government should consider building its own nuclear weapons chest.

"You have to protect your country," he said.
"There could come a moment in time that [Kim] could also have to face it may be the end of his regime, when he decides that pushing the button [will mean] history will remember him."

What happens should nuclear war occur is a total unknown, he said.

It would almost certainly result in hundreds of thousands, if not millions of deaths, with devastation on an unprecedented scale.

"And how does that play out in the rest of the world? We're not sure how it comes to an end."

He predicted the next few months were going to signal the direction the world would take.

North Korea warns of 'merciless strike' ahead of US-South Korea drills

By Faith Karimi, Brad Lendon and Yuli Yang, CNN

Updated 1003 GMT (1803 HKT) August 20, 2017

Story highlights

The threat appeared on the official government newspaper

North Korea warned Sunday that the upcoming US-South Korea military exercises are "reckless behavior driving the situation into the uncontrollable phase of a nuclear war."

Pyongyang also declared that its army can target the United States anytime, and neither Guam, Hawaii nor the US mainland can "dodge the merciless strike."

The messages in Rodong Sinmun, the official government newspaper, come a day before the US starts the Ulchi Freedom Guardian military exercises with South Korea.

Tensions between the two nations have grown in recent weeks.

Just last week, Pyongyang said it had finalized a plan to fire four missiles toward the US territory of Guam. State media reported that leader Kim Jong Un would assess the US' next move before giving launch orders.

Kim would "watch a little more the foolish and stupid conduct of the Yankees," a North Korean statement said last week.

But US military and Trump administration officials said the 10-day military exercises set to begin Monday, would go ahead as scheduled.

The annual drills antagonize Pyongyang, which sees them as practice for an invasion. However, the US and South Korea maintain they are purely defensive.
“The Trump group’s declaration of the reckless nuclear war exercises against the DPRK... is a reckless behavior driving the situation into the uncontrollable phase of a nuclear war,” Rodong Sinmun said, using the acronym for Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the nation’s official name.

It described North Korea as the “strongest possessor” of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of striking the US mainland from anywhere.

“The Korean People’s Army is keeping a high alert, fully ready to contain the enemies. It will take resolute steps the moment even a slight sign of the preventive war is spotted,” it said.

It did not provide any details on what it meant by “preventive war.”

Guam in crosshairs of fiery nuclear threats 02:46
Both US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis said last week that the US was keeping military options on the table in dealing with North Korea.

Tillerson said peaceful diplomatic pressure was the preferred way to get Pyongyang to stop its testing of nuclear-capable ballistic missiles. But he added that the diplomatic approach “has to be backed with military threat” if North Korea chooses to move forward with destabilizing actions.

Mitts also made clear the US’ willingness to use force if North Korea steps out of line.

“In close collaboration with our allies, there are strong military consequences if the DPRK initiates hostilities,” he said.

Promise from South Korea’s President
As tensions escalate, South Korean President Moon Jae-in promised his citizens last week there “will be no war on the Korean Peninsula ever again.”

Moon, who took office in May, announced on his 100th day in office that US and South Korean policies are aligned on North Korea.

US President Donald Trump assured South Korea he would consult with them before making any military decisions on North Korea, according to Moon.

Moon Chung-in: We do not want war 01:13
Moon said North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons technology was “near” a red line, which he described as “completing an ICBM and weaponizing it with a nuclear head.”

North Korea claims it has successfully miniaturized a nuclear weapon. While some experts believe it may have the technology, others caution that even if it doesn’t, North Korea should be taken at its word.

“If North Korea provokes again, it will face with much harsher sanction and won’t stand it in the end. I want to warn North Korea to do no more dangerous gambling,” Moon said.

His comments about averting war echoed similar statements he made Tuesday that only South Korea could give consent to initiate any conflict with the North.
“The government, putting everything on the line, will block war by all means,” Moon said.

China weighs in

China has urged both Washington and Pyongyang to tone down the rhetoric and stop actions that inflame tensions, missile testing on North Korea’s side and military exercises on the US and South Korean side.

China’s Global Times newspaper, a state-run tabloid, was scathing of South Korea’s decision to proceed with the drills.

“The drill will definitely provoke Pyongyang more, and Pyongyang is expected to make a more radical response,” it said in an editorial.

“If South Korea really wants no war on the Korean Peninsula, it should try to stop this military exercise.”

Euan McKirdy and Ben Westcott contributed to this report

North Korea crisis: War would be horrific, US general says

A military response to North Korea would be "horrific" but remains an option, the top military adviser to US President Donald Trump says.

Gen Joseph Dunford, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, made the comments while visiting China.

He was responding to remarks by a top Trump aide ruling out military action over North Korea’s nuclear programme.

Tensions have flared between the US and North Korea after Pyongyang made advances in its missile testing.

Mr Trump has warned the North that it faces "fire and fury", while Pyongyang has threatened to strike the American territory of Guam.

But the sharp rhetoric of last week has since softened, with North Korea leader Kim Jong-un putting the Guam plans on hold - a move praised by President Trump.

President Trump: "Kim Jong Un of North Korea made a very wise and well reasoned decision. The alternative would have been both catastrophic and unacceptable!"

Chief White House strategist Steve Bannon said on Wednesday there could be no military solution to the stand-off.

"Until somebody solves the part of the equation that shows me that 10 million people in Seoul don’t die in the first 30 minutes from conventional weapons, I don’t know what you’re talking about, there’s no military solution here, they got us," he told The American Prospect.

Gen Dunford agreed a military solution would be "horrific" but went on to say "what’s unimaginable to me is not a military option".

What does Kim Jong-un really want?

The crisis in 300 words

"What is unimaginable is allowing [North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un] to develop ballistic missiles with a nuclear warhead that can threaten the United States and continue to threaten the region," he told The American Prospect.

He said President Trump "has told us to develop credible, viable military options, and that’s exactly what we’re doing".
A senior Chinese military official who met Gen Dunford told him that military action should be ruled out and that "dialogue" was the only option, the Chinese defence ministry said.

China is the North's only major ally. The US has criticized China for not doing enough to rein it in, but Beijing says it has begun halting iron, iron ore and seafood imports from North Korea, in line with new UN sanctions.

Trump praises North Korea's Kim for 'wise' decision on Guam

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. President Donald Trump on Wednesday praised North Korean leader Kim Jong Un for a "wise" decision not to fire missiles toward the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam, which has eased escalating tension between the two countries.

Reclusive North Korea has made no secret of its plan to develop a nuclear-tipped missile capable of hitting the United States to counter what it perceives as constant U.S. threats of invasion.

Trump warned North Korea last week it would face "fire and fury" if it threatened the United States, prompting North Korea to say it was considering plans to fire missiles toward Guam.

But North Korean media reported on Tuesday that Kim had delayed the decision while he waited to see what the United States did next.

"Kim Jong Un of North Korea made a very wise and well reasoned decision," Trump wrote on Twitter.

"The alternative would have been both catastrophic and unacceptable!"

North Korea's threat to fire into the sea near Guam had prompted Trump to say earlier that the U.S. military was "locked and loaded" if North Korea acted unwisely.

North Korea has long ignored warnings from the West and from its lone major ally, China, to halt its nuclear and missile tests which it conducts in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Wednesday it was time to "dial down rhetoric and dial up diplomacy" on North Korea and that he had told Russia, Japan, the United States, China and North and South Korea that he was available to help broker talks.

"My good offices are always available – and I conveyed this message yesterday to the representatives of the six-party talks," Guterres told reporters. "The solution to this crisis must be political. The potential consequences of military
action are too horrific to even contemplate."

The United States has been hoping China can press the North to rein in its weapons programs, something the top U.S. general reiterated in talks in Beijing this week.

Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Joseph Dunford told Fang Fenghui, chief of the Joint Staff Department of the People's Liberation Army, that North Korea's weapons programs threatened the entire international community, including China.

"He emphasized that the U.S. and China have the same goal - a denuclearized Korean peninsula achieved through peaceful means ... North Korean actions threaten the economic and military security of China," a U.S. military spokesman said in a statement.

"In the interest of regional stability, he said the U.S. views with growing urgency the need for China to increase pressure on the North Korean regime," the spokesman said.

'SOLIDARITY AND RESOLVE'

China has repeatedly called for all sides to exercise restraint and remain calm, and while it has signed up for tough U.N. sanctions on North Korea, it says the key to a resolution lies in Washington and Pyongyang talking to each other, rather than expecting China to do all the work.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said while everyone was concerned about the situation, Chinese pressure on North Korea had made him more upbeat.

"Since yesterday we are a bit more optimistic; I think that above all Chinese pressure contributed to the statements from North Korea about definitely putting aside these ideas of firing a missile," Gabriel said in Berlin. He said he had spoken with his counterparts in China, the United States and South Korea in recent days.

"All options" are on the table with regards to North Korea, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence told reporters in Chile on Wednesday. He called on Latin American nations to break ties with Pyongyang.

Japan conducted air maneuvers with U.S. bombers southwest of the Korean peninsula on Wednesday involving two U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer bombers flying from Andersen Air Force Base on Guam and two Japanese F-15 jet fighters, Japan's Air Self Defence Force said in a news release.

"These training flights with Japan demonstrate the solidarity and resolve we share with our allies to preserve peace and security in the Indo-Asia-Pacific," the U.S. Air Force said.

The U.S. aircraft have flown several sorties in East Asia in recent weeks. In addition to air drills with Japanese fighters, the bombers have also exercised with South Korean aircraft.

North Korea regards the U.S. exercises with South Korea and Japan as preparations for invasion. The exercises also upset China, which says they do nothing to ease tension.

President Trump praises 'wise decision' from Kim Jong Un on Twitter

17 Aug, 2017 6:46am
3 minutes to read

US President Donald Trump says North Korea "will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen" if it threatened the United States again. (Source: AP) news.com.au
By Victoria Craw

President Trump has praised Kim Jong Un for making what he called a “very wise and well reasoned decision” to halt missile tests towards Guam.

“Kim Jong Un of North Korea made a very wise and well reasoned decision. The alternative would have been both catastrophic and unacceptable!” the US leader tweeted on Wednesday.

It comes after tensions between the two countries reached fever pitch with fears the US and North Korea were on the brink of a nuclear war.

This week, Kim praised the North Korean military for creating a “close and careful plan” to launch missiles towards Guam.

However he said he would watch the “foolish and stupid conduct of the Yankees” before deciding whether to order the test in a move that was seen as leaving the door open to diplomatic efforts.

Pictures showed Kim sitting at a table with a large map marked by a straight line between what appeared to be northeastern North Korea and Guam, and passing over Japan - apparently showing the missiles' flight route.

It had led to fears a missile launch could leave just minutes for civilians in Guam, Japan or Hawaii to react.

An upcoming pre-planned military drill between the US and South Korea was also expected to antagonise the North Korean leader even further.

The apparent climb-down comes after rising rhetoric in which Trump threatened “fire and fury” and vowed US military solutions were “locked and loaded” should Kim Jong Un act “unwisely”.

However the US has also been pursuing diplomatic backchannels including increased UN sanctions and talks with China.
On Wednesday, General Joe Dunford, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Chinese General Fang Fenghui the United States was ready to use military options if diplomacy fails, according to a Pentagon spokesman.

During their talks, Dunford and Fang signed a Joint Staff Dialogue Mechanism to improve communication between the US and Chinese militaries and prevent the risk of an accident leading to a nuclear war.

Dunford "stressed that it will only be useful if it results in reducing the risk of miscalculation, which not only has long-term benefits to manage bilateral differences."

China has urged the US and North Korea to "hit the brakes" on the verbal threats that have led to emergency warnings being issued in Hawaii and Guam.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov they should not "stir up an incident on their doorstep".

"The most important task at hand is for the US and North Korea to 'hit the brakes' on their mutual needling of each other with words and actions, to lower the temperature of the tense situation and prevent the emergence of an 'August crisis,'" he said.

N Korea leader 'briefed' on Guam plan but opts to wait

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has reviewed plans to fire missiles towards the US Pacific territory of Guam, state media said, but would watch US actions before making a decision.

Although prepared for "the enveloping fire at Guam", the North said it would watch what "the foolish Yankees" do.

Last week's threat against Guam escalated the sharp rhetoric being exchanged between the two sides.

This latest report points to a pause in the increasingly bitter war of words.

Who does Kim Jong-un really want?
What could North Korea do?
North Korea's neighbours consider risk of war

The report on state news agency KCNA said Kim Jong-un "examined the plan for a long time" and discussed it with senior military officials.

The commander of North Korea's strategic force was now merely waiting for orders "after rounding off the preparations for the enveloping fire at Guam".

But, crucially, the report also added that the North Korean leader would watch the US, before making any decision, signalling an apparent deceleration in the provocative rhetoric.
The BBC's Yogita Limaye in Seoul points out that this latest commentary talks of how to "defuse the tensions and prevent dangerous military conflict on the Korean peninsula".

Our correspondent adds that after days of menacing threats from Pyongyang, it might seem that Kim Jong-un could be in the mood to finally hit the pause button - but in a nation as secretive as North Korea, one can never be sure.

Analysts say it could simply mean Pyongyang is not fully ready to launch an attack on Guam, so could just be buying more time.

**What is the latest comment from the US?**

The statement came after a stark warning from US Defence Secretary James Mattis that any attack could quickly escalate into war, and if Pyongyang fired a missile towards Guam, "then it's game on."

He told reporters that the US military would defend the country "from any attack, at any time and from any quarter."

He also sought to reassure residents of Guam, home to US military bases and about 160,000 people, that they were well-protected and said that if a missile was fired, "we'll take it out."

**North Korea threats unsettle Guam islanders**

The tiny but important island of Guam

The 541sq km (209 sq miles) volcanic and coral island in the Pacific between the Philippines and Hawaii.

It is a "non-incorporated" US territory, with a population of about 163,000.

That means people born in Guam are US citizens, have an elected governor and House Representative, but cannot vote for a president in US national elections.

US military bases cover about a quarter of the island. About 6,000 personnel are based there and there are plans to move in thousands more.

It was a key US base in World War Two, and remains a vital staging post for US operations, giving access to potential flashpoints like the South China Sea, the Koreas and the Taiwan Straits.

Guam profile from BBC Monitoring

**What about North Korea's neighbours?**

South Korea and China - North Korea's closest ally - have been urging calm and a renewed push for diplomatic resolutions.

On Tuesday South Korean President Moon Jae-in said that the US should not act unilaterally on the Korean peninsula, and that consent was crucial before any military action.

**The K-pop concert seeking to broker Korean peace**
China's foreign ministry on Monday reiterated its "suspension for suspension proposal" where North Korea stops its military tests in exchange for a freeze on military exercises by the US and South Korea.

Chinese state media outlet Global Times also urged South Korea to "act as a buffer" between the North and the US, arguing that China has less influence over Pyongyang than South Korea has on the US.

How did tensions escalate so rapidly?

Over the last year North Korea has stepped up its missile tests, despite repeated warnings from all quarters. The state had already conducted five nuclear tests, but then in July it launched two intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) claiming it now had the ability to hit the US mainland.

The UN then approved fresh economic sanctions against North Korea to pressure it into giving up its nuclear ambitions. The measures aim to reduce North Korea's export revenues by a third.

Pyongyang reacted furiously to the new sanctions, calling them a "violent violation of our sovereignty" and warning that the US would "pay a price".

Last week, US media reported that North Korea had achieved its goal of making a nuclear warhead small enough to fit inside its missiles. Although not confirmed, this was seen as one of the final obstacles to North Korea being a fully nuclear-armed state.

It prompted US President Donald Trump to threaten North Korea with "fire and fury" if it continued to threaten the US and its allies. He added to the forthright rhetoric saying the US nuclear arsenal was "more powerful than ever before" and "locked and loaded".

US on high alert as satellites observe North Korea moving missiles into position

15 Aug, 2017 10:30am
4 minutes to read

A television screen shows North Korea's threats to strike Guam with ballistic missiles. Photo / AP

By News Corp Australia Network writers

Spy satellites have observed North Korea moving a missile into position for a possible launch, with the US saying its forces are on high alert.

Officials have told US media that spy satellites have observed DPRK mobile missile launcher movement, indicating a intermediate-ballistic missile launch may be being prepared.

Will Ripley

Sr defense official: US satellites observe North Korea mobile missile launcher movement, intermediate ballistic missile launch prep possible
8:19 AM - Aug 15, 2017 - Beijing, People's Republic of China
4848 Replies
524524 Retweets
256256 likes

The report comes as US Secretary of Defence James Mattis warns any further escalation could rapidly lead to war: "Yes that means for a lot of young troops they're going to be in a wartime situation".

Such intermediate missiles do not have the capacity to reach the mainland United States, but can reach the US military bases in Guam.
The DPRK has this morning issued a press statement saying it has presented plans to "envelope" Guam in fire to President Kim Jong-un.

"The nuclear force of the DPRK is strong in its guts and no one can guess its muscle as the flight trajectory of medium-to-long ballistic rocket Hwasong-12, firing data and the correct hitting-point are made public at home and abroad."

"POWER DEMONSTRATION"

Pyongyang's state media has this morning reported President Kim Jong-un as having "praised" his Strategic Force for drawing up a "careful" plan for a "power demonstration" to "envelope" Guam in fire.

"The nuclear force of the DPRK is strong in its guts and no one can guess its muscle as the flight trajectory of medium-to-long ballistic rocket Hwasong-12, firing data and the correct hitting-point are made public at home and abroad."
'WARTIME SITUATION'

Mattis told reporters in Washington this morning the situation could escalate to war "very quickly".

He said it could be assessed "within moments" if a missile fired from North Korea was on track to hit Guam.

The United States would "take out" any seen to be heading for American soil.

If missiles were fired at US bases: "I think if they fire at the US it could escalate to war very quickly ... Yes, that's called war, if they shoot at us."

He added: "If they shoot at the United States, I'm assuming they hit the United States. If they do that, it's game on."
North Korea has previously stated its plan is to fire missiles to land in the ocean "near" Guam, not at Guam itself. The US has stated this would be an unacceptable provocation.

Mattis was asked what response the US would give to such a "near miss": "You can't make all those kinds of decision in advance," he said. "There's a host of things going on. There's allies that we consult with ... "I need a certain amount of ambiguity on this".

Mattis' comments came after he and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson wrote in an opinion piece in the Wall Street Journal that America has "no interest" in regime change in Pyongyang or the accelerated reunification of the two Koreas, and stressed the importance of a diplomatic solution to the crisis.
HOLIDAY SPECTACLE?

Today is a public holiday in North Korea (Liberation of the Fatherland Day - marking the end of World War II). Previous missile launches have been timed to coincide with such calendar events to maximise internal propaganda impact.

This morning's DPRK statement also attacked planned US-South Korea "Freedom Guardian" military drills scheduled for August 21.

"No matter what rhetoric they let out about "annual, regular and defensive drills", they cannot cover up the danger of a war outbreak," the statement says.

"If any accidental case would be sparked, though unwanted, it would never avert a war. What matters is that when a second Korean War breaks out, it would be a nuclear war."

North Korea crisis: South's leader in plea to avoid war

South Korean President Moon Jae-in has called on his US allies to help prevent a war, amid worsening tension over the North's nuclear threat.

Mr Moon told the visiting top US military official that there must be a diplomatic solution to the crisis.

Gen Joseph Dunford said the US priority was diplomacy but added that military options were being prepared should sanctions against the North fail.

"The North on Monday said any war could "only be turned into a nuclear war".

Also on Monday, China's commerce ministry issued an order banning a slew of imports from North Korea, in line with additional UN sanctions that were announced earlier this month.

The sanctions were introduced in response to a wave of missile tests and increased military rhetoric from North Korea.

South Koreans give their views on Trump's strategy on North Korea

The latest tests led US President Donald Trump to warn of "fire and fury like the world has never seen".

He said the US was "locked and loaded" after the North threatened to target the US territory of Guam with missile tests. The US has 28,500 troops in South Korea.

Mr Moon sought to ease the tension, telling advisers at a meeting: "Our top priority is the national interest of [South Korea] and our national interest lies in peace."

"I am confident that the US will respond to the current situation in a calm and responsible manner in line with our policy direction."

He said the 1950-53 Korean war had "cost more than a million lives, left cities in ruins and perpetuated the division of the peninsula."

Mr Moon also urged the North to "stop all provocations and hostile rhetoric immediately, instead of worsening the situation any further."

Gen Dunford, the chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, told Mr Moon that the US priority was supporting diplomatic and economic sanctions against the North, South Korea's presidential office said.

But military options are being prepared.

Gen Dunford said as he arrived in Seoul: "As a military leader, I have to make sure that the president does have viable military options in the event that the diplomatic and economic pressurisation campaign fails."
President Donald Trump has warned North Korea will be in "big, big trouble" if it acts against Guam.

He will later travel to China and Japan.

The North's news agency, KCNA, warned on Monday that a conflict could be sparked with "a minor incident".

It said: "The problem is that if the war occurs, it can only be turned into a nuclear war."

It added: "We are watching every single thing in the United States."

On Sunday, US National Security Adviser HR McMaster said he did not think the sides were closer to war than a week ago, while CIA Director Mike Pompeo said he saw no intelligence to suggest the sides were on the cusp of a nuclear war.

Reality Check: Are Trump's assumptions right?

Kim Jong-un, North Korea's supreme commander

Trump administration's mixed messages

Who said it: Trump or Kim?

Meanwhile, China has signalled it will halt iron, iron ore and seafood imports from North Korea starting on Tuesday, following the UN resolution on sanctions.

Analysis: Different this time?

John Sudworth, BBC Beijing correspondent

China's announcement today formally incorporates the new tougher sanctions into its customs regulations.

But then it has signed up to the previous rounds of sanctions, only to be seen to drag its feet.

The big question is whether it's going to be any different this time.

There are signs that the much tougher line coming from Washington is having some effect on Beijing. It has already stopped imports of North Korean coal and the total value of all imports is down compared with this time last year.

But China has said all along that sanctions are for targeting North Korea's weapons programmes, not choking off the wider economy. Total trade, taking into account both imports and exports, has grown this year compared with last.

What are the new sanctions?

Importing coal, seafood, iron and iron ore, lead and lead ore from North Korea is banned
Countries cannot receive new North Korean workers
No new joint ventures with North Korean entities or individuals
No new investment in existing joint ventures
More individuals targeted with travel bans and assets freezes
Member states to report to the UN Security Council within 90 days on how they have implemented resolution

North Korea recalls key ambassadors to China, Russia and the UN back home

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has ordered back key ambassadors from China, Russia and the UN. Photo/AP

Daily Mail

North Korea has recalled several of its key ambassadors back to the country for a joint meeting in the capital.

The ongoing meeting reportedly includes Ambassador Ji Jae-ryong, Ambassador Ja Song-nam and Ambassador Kim Hyong-jun, North Korea's top envoys to China, the United Nations and Russia, respectively, according to Daily Mail.

"North Korea seems to be hosting what appears to be a meeting of foreign diplomatic missions' chiefs after calling its ambassadors to major countries back to Pyongyang," a government official told Yonhap News Agency.

It is not known how many ambassadors are involved in the meeting.
The Ministry of Unification's spokesman Baik Tae-hyun said in a press briefing that the meeting may be part of North Korea's regular gathering of ambassadors.

"North Korea held the 43rd ambassadors' meeting in July 2015 and (the latest meeting) seems to be in line with that," said the spokesman.

However, there are rumors the meeting may be linked with the country's purported preparations for further military provocations, such as nuclear test or more missile launches.

This week, US President Donald Trump vowed that North Korea would be met with 'fire and fury' if leader Kim Jung-Un followed through on a threat to execute a missile strike on nearby Guam, a US territory with an American military base.

Despite calls for Trump to tone down the rhetoric and end the back-and-forth with Kim, the president continued to make his point, saying Friday that the US military is "locked and loaded".

However, CIA director Mike Pompeo assured there was "nothing imminent" in the US standoff with nuclear-armed North Korea.

"There's nothing imminent. There's no intelligence indicating we're on the cusp of a nuclear war," he told Fox News Sunday.

"But make no mistake about it...the increased chance that there will be a nuclear missile in Denver is a very serious threat."

Pompeo said the US intelligence community has "a pretty good idea" about what's going on in North Korea.

He also dismissed talk from those who suggested the White House was surprised by a news report that North Korea now has a miniaturized nuclear warhead that can be put on an intercontinental ballistic missile that could hit the US.

"It doesn't surprise me that those who came before us were surprised; they did nothing," he said.

He added that he was confident North Korea would continue to develop its missile capabilities under Kim Jong-Un.

Additionally, National Security Adviser HR McMaster said Sunday that the US is "taking all possible actions" to resolve the nuclear threat from North Korea without resorting to military action.

When asked on ABC's This Week to clarify if threats alone would provoke a military response from the US, McMaster replied that it "depends on the nature of the threat."
Meanwhile, General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, is set to meet with South Korea's president on Monday. Dunford and President Moon Jae-in will reportedly discuss the threat from the North and South Korea's longstanding alliance with the US.

Moon, who took office on May 10, has found himself largely sidelined as the White House and Pyongyang traded threats, raising fears of possible military conflict as the divided peninsula faces its worst crisis in years.

But North Korea isn't the only nation the US is currently at odds with.

President Trump is allegedly planning to launch an investigation of whether China is stealing US technology.

The Chinese government has yet to comment on the announcement.

Watch your words, China urges Trump

China wants the US and North Korea to show restraint as a war of words escalates.

North Korea: China urges Trump not to worsen situation

China's President Xi Jinping has urged Donald Trump and North Korea to avoid "words and actions" that worsen tensions, state media say.

Mr Trump and North Korea have been exchanging hostile rhetoric, with the US president threatening to rain "fire and fury" on the North.

But China, North Korea's only major ally, has been urging restraint.

A White House statement said the US and China agreed North Korea must stop "provocative and escalatory behaviour".

Long-standing tensions over North Korea's nuclear programme worsened when it tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July.

The regime was also angered by last week's UN decision to increase economic sanctions against it.

According to Chinese state media, Mr Xi told Mr Trump in a phone call that "all relevant parties" should stop "words and deeds" that would exacerbate the situation.

Mr Xi also stressed China and the US shared "common interests" over denuclearisation and maintaining peace on the Korean peninsula.

Trump threatens North Korea with "big trouble" over Guam
President Donald Trump has warned North Korea to expect "big, big trouble" if anything happens to the US territory of Guam.

Speaking at his Bedminster, New Jersey golf resort, he promised the territory would be "very safe, believe me".

Mr Trump said the US could impose further sanctions, "as strong as they get", on North Korea.

He later spoke to Chinese President Xi Jinping, who stressed the need for a peaceful resolution, Chinese TV said.

President Xi called on "relevant parties" to exercise restraint and avoid words and actions that would exacerbate tension, state TV reported, adding that it was in the interests of both China and the US to pursue the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

"Hopefully, it will all work out," Mr Trump said earlier, striking an upbeat tone after a day of rhetorical brinkmanship.

"Nobody loves a peaceful solution better than President Trump, that I can tell you."

Trump warns North Korea against making 'overt' threats

By Dan Merica, CNN

Updated 0408 GMT (1208 HKT) August 12, 2017

Source: CNN

President Donald Trump stood by his bellicose rhetoric on North Korea Friday, telling leader Kim Jong Un he "will truly regret it and he will regret it fast" if he issues an overt threat or attacks Guam or a US ally.

"This man will not get away with what he is doing," Trump told reporters. "If he utters one threat in the form of an overt threat ... or if he does anything with respect to Guam, or any place else that is an American territory or an America ally, he will truly regret it and he will regret it fast."

Trump warns N Korea that US military is 'locked and loaded'

Image copyright

President Donald Trump says the US military is "locked and loaded" to deal with North Korea, ramping up the rhetorical brinkmanship.

"Military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely. Hopefully Kim Jong-un will find another path," he tweeted.

He spoke as Pyongyang accused him of "driving" the Korean peninsula to the "brink of a nuclear war".
North Korea has announced plans to fire missiles near the US territory of Guam.

The Pacific island's homeland security agency issued a fact sheet on Friday with tips for residents to prepare for any missile threat.

**Trump administration's mixed messages**

**North Korea's neighbours consider risk of war**

It states: "Do not look at the flash or fireball - it can blind you."

"Lie flat on the ground and cover your head. If the explosion is some distance away, it could take 30 seconds or more for the blast wave to hit."

It's not the first time North Korea has made threats against Guam

Moscow said the exchange of threats between Washington and Pyongyang "worry us very much".

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov rated the risk of military conflict as "very high" as he put forward a joint Russian-Chinese plan to defuse the crisis.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said there was no military solution, and "an escalation of the rhetoric is the wrong answer."

Mr Trump's tweet follows his threat earlier this week to rain "fire and fury" on Pyongyang.

His latest post came hours after his Defence Secretary Jim Mattis attempted to cool tensions by emphasising a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

Speaking in California late on Thursday, the Pentagon chief said it was his job to be ready for conflict.

But he said the effort by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and UN Ambassador Nikki Haley "has diplomatic traction. It is gaining diplomatic results."

Mr Mattis added: "The tragedy of war is well enough known. It doesn't need another characterisation beyond the fact that it would be catastrophic."

When asked about US military plans for a potential conflict, he said the country was ready, but he would not "tell the enemy in advance what I'm going to do".

Also on Friday, North Korea's official KCNA news agency accused Washington of a "criminal attempt to impose nuclear disaster upon the Korean nation".

Pyongyang's media outlet said America was making "desperate efforts" to test weapons in the Korean peninsula.

**Australia would aid US over N Korea**

The US is "the mastermind of nuclear threat, the heinous nuclear war fanatic", the report said.

Despite the rhetoric from both sides, the Trump administration has been conducting behind-the-scenes diplomacy with North Korea for several months, the Associated Press news agency reports.

Washington has been addressing the issue of Americans detained in the country and escalating tensions on the peninsula, according to AP.

Joseph Yun, the US envoy for North Korea, and Pak Song-Il, a senior North Korean diplomat at the UN, are said to be leading the talks.
Tensions have risen since North Korea tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July.

The regime was further angered by last week's UN decision to increase economic sanctions against it. North Korea said it was finalising a plan to fire medium-to-long-range rockets towards Guam, where US strategic bombers are based, along with more than 160,000 US citizens.

There has been no indication that any actual attack on the Pacific island is imminent.

Can the US defend itself?

On Thursday Mr Trump suggested that his own statements on North Korea had not been tough enough, warning the regime to be "very, very nervous". However, he added that the US would always consider negotiations.

He also chided the North's closest ally, China, saying it could do "a lot more".

China's foreign minister said new U.N. Security Council sanctions on North Korea were the right response to a series of missile tests.

Belgium – China won't come to North Korea's help if it launches missiles threatening U.S. soil and there is retaliation, a state-owned newspaper warned on Friday, but it would intervene if Washington strikes first.

The Global Times newspaper is not an official mouthpiece of the Communist Party, but in this case its editorial probably does reflect government policy and can be considered "semiofficial," experts said.

China has repeatedly warned both Washington and Pyongyang not to do anything that raises tensions or causes instability on the Korean Peninsula, and strongly reitered that suggestion Friday.
"The current situation on the Korean Peninsula is complicated and sensitive," Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in a statement.

"China hopes that all relevant parties will be cautious on their words and actions, and do things that help to alleviate tensions and enhance mutual trust, rather than walk on the old pathway of taking turns in shows of strength, and upgrading the tensions."

In this U.S. Department of Defense, a B-1B Lancer prepares to take off from Andersen Air Force base, Guam on Aug. 7. (Richard P. Ebensberger/AFP/Getty Images)

In an editorial, The Global Times said China should make it clear to both sides: "when their actions jeopardize China's interests, China will respond with a firm hand."

"China should also make clear that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten U.S. soil first and the U.S. retaliates, China will stay neutral," it added. "If the U.S. and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so."

The Global Times warning comes at the end of a week of threat and counterthreat between Washington and Pyongyang, and as the United States weighs up its options to deal with the threat of North Korea's nuclear and missile program.

The Global Times said both sides were engaging in a "reckless game" that runs the risk of descending into a real war.

On Tuesday, President Trump threatened to respond to further threats from North Korea by unleashing "fire and fury like the world has never seen." Pyongyang in turn threatened to strike the U.S. territory of Guam in the Western Pacific with ballistic missiles.

The Global Times also cited reports that the Pentagon has prepared plans for B-1B strategic bombers to make preemptive strikes on North Korea's missile sites, and a strongly worded ultimatum from Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis that North Korea should not consider "actions that would lead to the end of its regime and destruction of its people."

The paper's comments also reflect the 1961 Sino-North Korean Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which obliges China to intervene if North Korea is subject to unprovoked aggression — but not necessarily if Pyongyang starts a war.

"The key point is in the first half of the sentence; China opposes North Korea testing missiles in the waters around Guam," said Cheng Xiaohe, a North Korea expert at Renmin University of China in Beijing.

With the situation on the Korea Peninsula sliding dangerously toward the point of no return, Chinese media are starting to declare their positions on any potential war, he said. "Secondly, in a half-official way, China is starting to review and clarify the 1961 treaty."

China has become deeply frustrated with the regime in Pyongyang, and genuinely wants to see a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. But it has always refused to do anything that might destabilize or topple a regime which has long been both ally and buffer state.

That's because Beijing does not want to see a unified Korean state allied to the United States right up against its border: indeed, hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers died during the 1950-53 Korean War to prevent that happening.
So for now, the current uneasy status quo for China still seems better than the alternatives.

That is doubly true ahead of an important Communist Party Congress in the fall, at which President Xi Jinping wants to project an aura of stability and control as he aims to consolidate his power at the start of a second five-year term.

Nevertheless, experts said debate is underway behind the scenes in China about its support for the North Korean regime.

In an article on the Financial Times China website in May, for example, Tong Zhiwei, a law professor at the East China University of Political Science and Law in Shanghai, argued that China should make terminating the 1961 treaty a near-term diplomatic goal, because North Korea, also known as the DPRK, had used it as cover to develop its nuclear program and avoid punishment.

That, he wrote, was not in China’s interests.

“In the past 57 years, the treaty has strongly protected the security of the DPRK and peace on the Korean Peninsula, but it has also been used by the North Korean authorities to protect their international wrongful acts from punishment,” he wrote.

Meanwhile, China has reacted strongly to the United States sending a warship close to an island it controls in the South China Sea.

The U.S. Navy destroyer, USS John S. McCain, traveled close to Mischief Reef in the disputed Spratly Islands on Thursday, in the third “freedom of navigation” exercise in the area conducted under the Trump administration, Reuters reported.

China’s Defense Ministry said two Chinese warships “jumped into action” and warned the U.S. ship to leave, labeling the move a “provocation” that seriously harms mutual trust.

China’s Foreign Ministry said the operation had violated international and Chinese law and seriously harmed Beijing’s sovereignty and security.

“The Chinese side is strongly dissatisfied with this and will lodge solemn representations to the U.S. side,” the ministry said in a statement.

Shirley Feng contributed to this report.

Chinese state-owned paper says China will intervene and stop America if it attacks North Korea first

By Hannah Parry

China will intervene if America attacks North Korea first, according to a state-owned paper, and will only stay neutral if Kim Jong-un attacks the US first.

An editorial in the Global Times, warned that “China should also make clear that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten US soil first and the US retaliates, China will stay neutral,” the Daily Mail reported.

“If the US and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so.”
China also expressed its "strong dissatisfaction" with the US Navy over its operations in the South China Sea.

The warning comes amid escalating tensions between the US and North Korea.

Pyongyang has warned it plans to launch a nuclear strike on Guam after President Trump announced that any more threats against the US would be met with "fire and fury".

Pentagon chief James Mattis issued his own warning among the increasingly aggressive rhetoric, telling Kim Jong-un that he risks destroying his regime and his people if he attacks.

Today, Trump ratcheted up his rhetoric towards Jong-un, warning Pyongyang against attacking Guam or US allies.

The magnitude of the nuclear crisis was underlined as one White House aide, Sebastian Gorka, compared it to the Cuban Missile Crisis.

China, North Korea's most important ally and trading partner, has reiterated calls for calm during the current crisis.

It has expressed frustration with both Pyongyang's repeated nuclear and missile tests and with behavior from South Korea and the United States that it sees as escalating tensions.

The widely read state-run Times, published by the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily, wrote in an editorial that Beijing is not able to persuade either Washington or Pyongyang to back down.

"If the U.S. and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so."

**North Korea - buffer state**

China has long worried that any conflict on the Korean peninsula, or a repeat of the 1950-53 Korean war, could unleash a wave of destabilising refugees into its northeast, and could end up with a reunified county allied with the United States.

North Korea is a useful buffer state for China between it and US forces based in South Korea, and also across the sea in Japan.

The Global Times said China will "firmly resist any side which wants to change the status quo of the areas where China's interests are concerned".

"The Korean Peninsula is where the strategic interests of all sides converge, and no side should try to be the absolute dominator of the region."

Amid heightened tensions in the region, Beijing staged "large-scale" military exercises with dozens of ships, fighter jets and submarines adjacent to the Korean Peninsula on Monday - just months after moving 150,000 troops to its border with North Korea.

Calling the situation on the Korean Peninsula "complicated and sensitive", China's foreign ministry issued a statement warning that parties involved in the impasse should avoid "words and actions that escalate the situation".

Russia, meanwhile, moved military equipment including helicopters and combat vehicles to its southern frontier with the hermit state earlier this year. Moscow has displayed its own frightening military strength at a war games event in Siberia this week and during a vast Navy Day parade in Vladivostok - about 100 miles from North Korean territory.

Germany urged both North Korea and the United States to show "restraint" in their mounting war of words.
"We are watching the increasing rhetorical escalation regarding the Korean Peninsula with the greatest concern," foreign ministry spokesman Martin Schaefer told reporters. "That is why we call on all sides to use restraint."

Schaefer said Berlin was convinced a "military option" could not be "the answer in the quest for a nuclear weapon-free Southeast Asia".

He urged the international community to "thoroughly implement" the latest round of sanctions against North Korea approved by the United Nations Security Council and backed a call by Tillerson to resume talks with Pyongyang if it halts ballistic missile tests.

"We must all continue our diplomatic efforts - it is the only way to ensure that the threat of the illegal North Korean nuclear weapons programme can be contained," he said.

'We will come to the aid of the United States'

However, the US would not be alone if it did decide to strike first.

Australia "will come to the aid of the United States" if North Korea attacks, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said, after Pyongyang outlined its plans to fire missiles near the US territory of Guam.

The Australian leader's comments of support to close ally Washington followed President Donald Trump's warning to North Korea that it should be "very, very nervous" of the consequences if the isolated nation even thought of attacking US soil.

"The United States has no stronger ally than Australia," Turnbull told Melbourne commercial radio station 3AW. "And we have an ANZUS agreement and if there is an attack on Australia or the United States then... each of us will come to the other's aid.

"So let's be very clear about that. If there is an attack on the United States by North Korea, then the ANZUS treaty will be invoked and Australia will come to the aid of the United States."

The European Union said tensions over North Korea can only be resolved by peaceful means, with foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini's spokeswoman saying the developments are "of great concern to the EU".

Nuclear arsenal 'more powerful than ever before'

Relations between Washington and Pyongyang have been tense for months, in the wake of the North's repeated missile tests, including two successful intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test launches in July.

The escalating dispute took an unexpected turn Tuesday when Trump seemed to borrow from the North's arsenal of rhetoric and said it faced "fire and fury like the world has never seen" if it continued to threaten the US.

Trump himself fired another flare in Kim Jong-Un's direction on Wednesday morning, saying in tweets the United States' nuclear arsenal is "stronger and more powerful than ever before" and he "hopefully" won't need to use it.
"My first order as President was to renovate and modernise our nuclear arsenal. It is now far stronger and more powerful than ever before," Trump said. "Hopefully we will never have to use this power, but there will never be a time that we are not the most powerful nation in the world!"

Trump made the show of might on social media after his secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, tried to dial down the conflict as he returned to Washington from Southeast Asia on a trip that included a pit stop in Guam.

Guam, which is roughly 3424km from North Korea, is home to both Andersen Air Force Base and Naval Base Guam housing thousands of American service members and their families.

Roughly 28 per cent of the island is occupied by the US military. The base houses bomber assurance and deterrence missions, including six B-52s which the air force says provide "strategic global strike capability [to] deter potential adversaries and provide reassurance to allies" and that they are ready to go.

North Korea has said it could carry out a pre-emptive operation if the US showed signs of provocation.

Tillerson said Trump's "fire and fury" charge to Kim shouldn't have Americans panicking because North Korea does not pose an 'imminent threat' to the United States.

Pyongyang's volatile dictator has warned that he was "carefully examining" plans to make "an enveloping fire" around Guam, which is home to about 163,000 people and a sprawling American military base.

The UN Security Council on Saturday approved tough sanctions which could cost Pyongyang US$1 billion a year, with the sweeping measures the first of that scope to be imposed on North Korea since Trump took office.

China's 'strong dissatisfaction' at US Navy operation

Meanwhile, China expressed its "strong dissatisfaction" with the US over the Navy's latest freedom of navigation operation in which a warship sailed past one of China's man-made islands in the strategic South China Sea.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said in a statement late Thursday that the US move "severely undermines China's sovereignty and security, and severely endangers the safety of frontline personnel of both sides."

China, which claims virtually the entire South China Sea, routinely protests such operations, which President Donald Trump's
administration has continued partly to reassure allies locked in territorial disputes with Beijing.

"China has the firm determination to safeguard its territorial sovereignty and maritime interests," Geng said.

The US move will "compel China to take measures to further raise its capacity to defend national territory," he said.

A US Navy official told The Associated Press that the destroyer USS John S. McCain sailed past Mischief Reef on Thursday but gave no details.

US officials say the military will continue to sail, fly and operate wherever permitted by international law.

Geng said the Chinese navy "identified the US warship, warned and expelled it."

China and the US maintain different interpretations on international law as applied to the operation of warships, and Beijing has ignored a Hague arbitration court's ruling that invalidated much of its South China Sea claim.

Tensions escalated after China began to build seven reefs, including Mischief, into islands, including three with runways, which the US and China's neighbors fear could be used to project Beijing's military might and potentially obstruct freedom of navigation.

China has reportedly installed a missile defense system on the new islands, although Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Monday that China had "stopped or already completed land reclamation," on the islands two years ago.

Earlier, Wang said talks on a nonaggression pact aimed at preventing clashes from erupting in the South China Sea may start this year if "outside parties" don't cause a major disruption, in an apparent reference to Washington and allies such as Japan.

The US is not a party to the disputes in the busy and potentially oil- and gas-rich waters that also involve Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.

Washington, however, has declared it in its interest to ensure that the conflicts are resolved peacefully and that freedom of navigation and overflight remain unhindered.

An estimated $5 trillion in annual trade passes through the waterway.

Washington's critical actions came as it courts the help of China, North Korea's ally, in taming Pyongyang's nuclear weapons ambitions and ending its missile tests.

- additional reporting AP

**Trump warns N Korea 'be very very nervous'**

Media caption
Trump says his earlier warning to North Korea "wasn't tough enough"

President Donald Trump has warned North Korea it should be "very, very nervous" if it does anything to the US.

He said the regime would be in trouble "like few nations have ever been" if they do not "get their act together".

His comments came after Pyongyang announced it had a plan to fire four missiles near the US territory of Guam.

Tensions between the two countries have escalated in recent weeks after North Korea tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July.

The UN recently approved further economic sanctions against Pyongyang as a result of its nuclear weapons programme.

Can the US defend itself against North Korea?

**N Korea: The possible solutions**

Speaking on Thursday at his golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, Mr Trump also offered an olive branch, saying the US would always consider negotiations.

The Republican president said his own statements had not been tough enough on Pyongyang, despite his threat this week to rain "fire and fury" upon the regime.

Pyongyang earlier dismissed the US president's dire warnings as "nonsense".

But Mr Trump doubled down on Thursday, saying: "It's about time someone stood up for the people of our country."

**Trump warns N Korea 'be very very nervous'**
Mr Trump railed against previous US administrations for being too weak on North Korea, adding that the tiny dictatorship’s pursuit of nuclear weapons was a “tragedy”. He also chided China, saying they could do “a lot more” to intervene on the Korean peninsula.

But he said: “I will tell you this, if North Korea does anything in terms of even thinking about attack of anybody that we love or we represent or our allies or us they can be very, very nervous. “I’ll tell you why... because things will happen to them like they never thought possible.”

North Korea said on Wednesday it planned to fire medium-to-long-range rockets towards Guam, where US strategic bombers are based. However, there has been no indication that any attack on Guam by North Korea is imminent.

In a message to the public, the governor of Guam Eddie Baza Calvo said there was currently “no threat” to the island and the Marianas archipelago, but that Guam was “prepared for any eventualities.”

Mr Trump meanwhile denied there were any mixed messages from his administration.

Earlier this week, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson played down the rhetoric between the two sides. But in an interview with the BBC on Thursday, White House Deputy Assistant Sebastian Gorka dismissed the top diplomat’s comments. “You should listen to the president,” he said. “The idea that Secretary Tillerson is going to discuss military matters is simply nonsensical. “It is the job of Secretary Mattis as Secretary of Defense to talk about the military options and he has done so unequivocally today.”

US Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis said on Wednesday Pyongyang would be “grossly overmatched” in any war against the US and its allies.

North Korea Guam missile strike plan ‘ready by mid-August'

North Korea says it will be ready by mid-August to fire four missiles near the US territory of Guam, as a war of words with Washington intensifies.

North Korea Guam missile strike plan ‘ready by mid-August'

North Korea says it will be ready by mid-August to fire four missiles near the US territory of Guam, as a war of words with Washington intensifies. The US has warned the North its actions could mean the “end of its regime”.

The US warned in May that North Korea would be “grossly overmatched” in any war against the US and its allies.

Reality Check: Are Trump’s N Korea assumptions right?

The North first announced on Wednesday that it was planning a missile strike against Guam, which is home to US military bases, strategic bombers and about 163,000 people.

A later statement said the military would “finally complete the plan” by mid-August and report it to leader Kim Jong-un for his approval.

“The Hwasong-12 rockets to be launched by the KPA [Korean People’s Army] will cross the sky above Shimane, Hiroshima and Kochi Prefectures of Japan,” state news agency KCNA said.
quoting army chief General Kim Rak Gyom. “They will fly 3,356.7km for 1,065 seconds and hit the waters 30-40km away from Guam.”

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It called President Trump’s remarks on Tuesday that the North risked “fire and fury” as “a load of nonsense”. “Sound dialogue is not possible with such a guy bereft of reason and only absolute force can work on him,” it added.

North Korea warned by Mattis not to invite ‘destruction’

The Pentagon chief also said Pyongyang would be “grossly overmatched” in a war against the US and its allies. His stark warning comes a day after President Donald Trump threatened North Korea with “fire and fury”. US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson sought to assure Americans there was no imminent threat.

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In Wednesday’s strongly worded statement, Mr Mattis called on Pyongyang to halt its arms programme. The US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis has told North Korea to avoid actions that could usher in the “end of its regime and the destruction of its people”. The Pentagon chief also said Pyongyang would be “grossly overmatched” in a war against the US and its allies.

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The North Korea crisis in 300 words

Analysis: Where do we go after ‘fire and fury’?

Can the US defend itself?

“The DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) must choose to stop isolating itself and stand down its pursuit of nuclear weapons,” the US Marine Corps general said. "While our state department is making every effort to resolve this global threat through diplomatic means, it must be noted that the combined allied militaries now possess the most precise, rehearsed and robust defensive and offensive capabilities on Earth.”

Pyongyang’s actions “will continue to be grossly overmatched by ours and would lose any arms race or conflict it initiated”, Mr Mattis added. Mr Trump - who has said he will not allow Pyongyang to develop a nuclear weapon capable of hitting the US - boasted earlier on Wednesday of America’s atomic arsenal. "While our state department is making every effort to resolve this global threat through diplomatic means, it must be noted that the combined allied militaries now possess the most precise, rehearsed and robust defensive and offensive capabilities on Earth.”

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The tweets come amid escalating rhetoric between the two sides. North Korea’s state-run KCNA news agency said on Wednesday that Pyongyang was “carefully examining” a plan to strike the US territory of Guam. The Pacific island is home to US military bases, strategic bombers and about 163,000 people.

Stopping in Guam to refuel after a trip to South East Asia, Mr Tillerson said he was hopeful a global “pressure campaign” involving Russia and China could lead to new dialogue with Pyongyang “about a different future.”

Media caption
America’s top diplomat also defended President Trump’s language.

Mr Tillerson added the situation had not dramatically changed over the last few days, and that Americans “should sleep well at night”.

China has urged calm, describing the situation as “complex and sensitive”.

Analysis: Tillerson gets his broom out

Anthony Zurcher, BBC senior North America reporter

As Donald Trump made his “fire and fury” threat against North Korea, the lone camera in the room zoomed in for a tight shot. It would have been telling to see the effect those words had on his advisers.

Did they nod knowingly or look surprised? Was this part of the plan or an off-the-cuff presidential remark they’d have to clean up?

A day later and thousands of miles away, Rex Tillerson had out his mop and broom. The secretary of state said Mr Trump was merely reasserting that the US would defend itself if attacked, using language North Korea would understand.

That’s not exactly what the president said, however. He warned of retribution if Kim Jong-un continued to make threats - punishing words with action.

It could simply be unfortunate phrasing from a man who is sometimes loose with words. Mr Tillerson would not be the first presidential aide intent on framing Mr Trump’s blunt statements in a softer light.

With the president touting US nuclear might and test-firing an ICBM, however, the secretary of state - already considered to have little sway in this administration - may find his efforts at clarification buried in a torrent of bluster.

The White House on Wednesday denied reports that Mr Trump’s “fire and fury” statement a day earlier, unusually provocative for a US president, was an off-the-cuff remark that had caught his inner circle unawares.

Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders told reporters: "The tone and strength of the message were discussed beforehand."

What damage could N Korea do without nuclear weapons?

Pyongyang released a Canadian pastor

N Korea hides anti-US message in cartoon

Despite rounds of UN sanctions, Pyongyang carried out two nuclear bomb tests last year and two intercontinental ballistic missile tests in July. On Tuesday, media reports in the US claimed the North had achieved its goal of making a nuclear warhead small enough to fit inside its missiles. However, most analysts doubt the tiny dictatorship would launch a suicidal pre-emptive attack on the US.

North Korea remains technologically in a state of war with the US and South Korea after the 1950-53 conflict on the peninsula ended in a truce.
The tiny but important island of Guam

The 541sq km (209 sq miles) volcanic and coral island in the Pacific between the Philippines and Hawaii. It is a "non-incorporated" US territory, with a population of about 163,000. That means people born in Guam are US citizens, have an elected governor and House Representative, but cannot vote for a president in US national elections.

US military bases cover about a quarter of the island. About 6,000 personnel are based there and there are plans to move in thousands more. It was a key US base in World War Two, and remains a vital staging post for US operations, giving access to potential flashpoints like the South China Sea, the Koreas and the Taiwan Straits.

Guam profile from BBC Monitoring

'Caught in the cross fire' - What's the mood on Guam right now?

Trump's credibility crisis goes nuclear

By Stephen Collinson, CNN

Updated 0806 GMT (1606 HKT) August 9, 2017
North Korea threatens strike on Guam

Trump, instantly escalating a nuclear showdown with North Korea, warned that if the isolated state did not quit making its own threats, it would face "fire and fury like the world has never seen."

From political, diplomatic, and historical perspectives, Trump's threat, delivered from his golf club in New Jersey, was an extraordinary moment and shattered years of national security conventions in apparently threatening to use nuclear weapons in response to an adversary's rhetoric -- rather than an existential threat to US security.
It might have also walked the United States closer to a full on showdown with North Korea, and placed his own personal reputation on the line in a test of wills with Kim Jong Un.

"He has been very threatening beyond a normal state. They will be met with fire, fury and frankly power the likes of which this world has never seen before," said Trump in remarks that seemed more typical of the blasts of rhetoric issued by the North Korean news agency KCNA rather than of a US president.

By accident or design, Trump established a red line -- an apparent contravention of efforts by his Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis to tone down tensions with Pyongyang.

By making such an explicit threat to North Korea, on camera, the President also invested his own personal prestige into the center of the crisis. The next time Kim makes some kind of threat to the US or its allies, Trump will immediately come under pressure to make North Korea pay a price -- or risk having his authority exposed as hollow.

The comments also came at a time when the President is undergoing a crisis of the kind of credibility commanders-in-chief need during a major national security crisis. A CNN poll Tuesday said that nearly three-quarters of Americans did not trust what is coming out of the White House. And a CBS News poll released Tuesday showed that 61% of Americans were uneasy about Trump's ability to handle the situation with North Korea.

"Donald Trump may put himself in a box because he is promising action that he might actually be unwilling to deliver on," said Timothy Naftali, a presidential historian at New York University. "So he should be careful what he threatens because he may, for the sake of US credibility, have to act on his threats. That's why presidents are so careful not to bluff. The other side can call your bluff."

TRUMP, KIM RAMP UP RHETORIC

Trump's broadside on Tuesday sparked warnings that he was pouring fire on an already volatile situation, and could be playing into Pyongyang's hands by validating its narrative that the US wants to go to war with North Korea -- a rallying point for the regime.

"It is acceptable for the President to say 'here's what we are going to do and here are the steps we are going to take ... and we are going to respond .... appropriately and with strength,'" Jamie Metzl, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council, told CNN's Jake Tapper.

"Just to throw around macho words or fake macho words, I don't know what that gets us," Metzl added.

Republican Sen. John McCain, the chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, faulted Trump's gambit.

"I take exception to the President's comments because you've got to be sure that you can do what you say you're going to do. In other words, the old walk softly but carry a big stick," McCain told KTAR radio in Arizona.
Looking for motive behind Trump's words

It was not immediately clear whether Trump's comments were off the cuff, or the product of a deliberate process between the President, senior members of his national security team and top military brass.

But the ferocity of his rhetoric has few recent precedents. President Ronald Reagan raised eyebrows by calling the Soviet Union an "Evil Empire" but not in the context of a threat. President George W. Bush once said "bring 'em on," when referring to the possibility that insurgents could use military force to push US forces out of Iraq, a comment for which he later expressed regret.

Bush, who liked to show some swagger in his first term, also put North Korea in an "axis of evil." Other presidents have surprised their teams by making policy on the hoof, Naftali said, including Richard Nixon who declared publicly in 1973 that the US would not give into blackmail from terrorists.

The closest parallel might be President Harry Truman's warning to Japan after the atomic bomb attack on Hiroshima and before the strike on Nagasaki, that if Japan did not immediately surrender it would face "a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this Earth."

But the circumstances of that warning -- at the end of the most ruinous conflict in human history -- hardly compare to the suddenness of Trump's public, televised warning on Tuesday.

'Trump hasn't a clue where Guam is': Locals terrified they'll be 'blown to smithereens' as North Korea tensions ramp up

Donald Trump is using Guam as a pawn in his stand-off with North Korea without even knowing where the US territory is, say terrified locals.

After the US President threatened "fire and fury" against the reclusive state, Kim Jong-un's hermit kingdom revealed it is considering detailed plans to aim a missile at the Western Pacific island.

Residents of the 550 square-kilometre territory, home to several US military bases, turned on Trump as they contemplated the dire warning from North Korea.

"We'll be blown to smithereens!" wrote former teacher Eileen Benavente-Blas on a community Facebook page. "Trump hasn't a clue where Guam is as he tweets our island into the nuclear hands of N. Korea."

In response to a query from news.com.au, Guamanian Milan Salas added: "Tell the world Guam (we) are a pawn of war. Collateral damage and victims every day from two spoiled rotten man child leaders Trump and Kim ... Kim Jung [sic] wants to kill us with his ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missiles] because of our ties as a territory to the USA ... USA wants to drown our livelihood with despair from over-militarisation that will hurt our ecosystem ... we are a cheese bait for NK."
"The Chamorro [indigenous] people have no true voice from everyday tyrants. Is there really true freedom, that I cannot vote for the POTUS who imposes his constitutional rights on me and strategically uses my home for military purposes as a target for the Asia-Pacific region?

"Where is our voice in all this?"

International experts have joined in the criticism of the President's "unhinged" verbal assault, which goes well beyond repeated warnings from the US military this year that action against North Korea is an option.

"Trying to out-threaten North Korea is like trying to out-pray the Pope," tweeted John Delury from Seoul's Yonsei University.

Security commentator Ankit Panda called Mr Trump's comments "dangerous and unusual", while Congressman Eliot Engel, Democratic senior member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, chastised the President for drawing an "absurd" red line that Kim would inevitably cross.

"North Korea is a real threat, but the President's unhinged reaction suggests he might consider using American nuclear weapons in response to a nasty comment from a North Korean despot," Mr Engel said in a statement.

Trump's apocalyptic warning to the reclusive state followed a Washington Post report on Tuesday that the Pyongyang regime had successfully produced a miniaturised nuclear warhead that can fit inside its intercontinental ballistic missiles.

This would mean North Korea has crossed a key threshold on the path to becoming a fully-fledged nuclear power, believed to have as many as 60 nuclear weapons.

"North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States," said the President, speaking from his golf club in New Jersey. "They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen."

With a population of 160,000 people, Guam is home to 6000 US troops at the Naval Base Guam and Andersen Air Force Base. Its tropical climate has also made it popular with tourists, although a direct twice-weekly flight from Cairns that carried mainly tourists was discontinued in 2015.

The Micronesian island, situated less than 3000km north of Australia and around 3400km southeast of Pyongyang, is the westernmost US territory, captured from Spain in 1898 during the Spanish-American War.

The hermit kingdom's threat to Guam came two days after the UN Security Council approved new sanctions to punish the state, which North Korea attacked as part of a "heinous US plot". US B1-B bombers then flew over the Korean peninsula on Tuesday, a move the state-run media said "proves that the US imperialists are nuclear war maniacs".
Kim Jong-un is now reportedly weighing up aiming intermediate range ballistic missiles at the US military outpost, which would create an "enveloping fire" around Guam. The plan could be put into action at "any moment" once the North Korean leader gives the word, its military said in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

It is not the first time the rogue state has threatened Guam. Last month, Pyongyang carried out its first two successful ICBM launches, the first - described by Kim as a gift to "American bastards" - showing it could reach Alaska, and the second extending its range even further, with some experts suggesting Australia could be at risk.

Guam's non-voting delegate to Congress Madeleine Bordallo called the attack reports "troubling" but said she was "confident that Guam remains safe and protected."

EXPERTS: US-N.KOREA NUCLEAR WAR UNLIKELY, BUT RISK IS RISING
A nuclear war between North Korea and the United States is not imminent, analysts said, but the inflammatory rhetoric on both sides is increasing the risk. They called on all parties to de-escalaate.

North Korea’s army said in a statement distributed by state media Wednesday that it was examining a plan to use ballistic missiles to make an “enveloping fire” around Guam, a U.S. territory that is home to Andersen Air Force Base. The statement came a day after President Donald Trump warned North Korea against making more threats, saying, “They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.”

What experts in South Korea, China and the U.S. had to say:

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SLIM CHANCE OF ATTACK

A North Korean attack or an American pre-emptive strike is unlikely, said John Delury, an associate professor of East Asian Studies at Yonsei University in Seoul.

He saw North Korea’s statement as a warning to Washington that its missiles could reach targets in the region, rather than one of an actual attack.

“Well, I’m gonna go out on a limb here and say if North Korea was planning some kind of pre-emptive or surprise attack on Guam, we would not be reading about it in North Korean media,” Delury said in an interview at his office. “Now that said, you do need to track their threats. And there are cases where they (have) made a specific threat and carried it out.”

A U.S. strike against North Korea would need the support of South Korea, he said, because the North would likely retaliate against the South and its 600,000 troops.

“If it’s not something you can do without robust, full support from the South Korean government people, and there’s absolutely no sign that South Korea will support military options with North Korea,” Delury said.

- Yong Jun Chang in Seoul, South Korea

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DEEP CONCERN IN BEIJING

Chinese government-backed scholars said Beijing is deeply concerned about the latest statements from Trump and North Korea. They hold the U.S. partly responsible, saying Trump’s heated rhetoric is fueling the flames.

Trump’s tough talk has contributed to an increase in animosity that is pushing the sides closer to armed conflict, said Cheng Xiaohui of the School of International Studies at Beijing’s Renmin University.

“If not kept well under control, this verbal spat could turn into a military clash,” he said, adding that China should dispatch diplomats to engage in shuttle diplomacy to bring the sides to the negotiating table.

China’s patience with North Korea, its onetime close ally, appears to be running thin: Beijing agreed to recent U.N. sanctions, despite potential losses to Chinese firms doing business with North Korea and fears over destabilizing the Pyongyang regime.

A top Chinese expert on North Korea said Pyongyang seemed to have been heartened by Washington’s failure to take firm measures in response to earlier actions.

“Trump said the U.S. would take tough measures if North Korea fired off missiles, but it did not,” said Zhang Liangui, a professor at the ruling Communist Party’s main training academy.

“This might make North Korea think that’s just some verbal threat, so its attitude is getting tougher and tougher.”

The U.S., China and Russia need to come together to force the North to de-escalate, he said.

“The big countries should not attack each other, but unite to better cooperate on maintaining the demilitarization of the Korean Peninsula.”

- Christopher Bodeen and Fu Ting in Beijing

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Trump’s Harsh Language on North Korea Has Little Precedent, Experts Say

WASHINGTON — President Trump’s warning on Tuesday that North Korea would experience “fire and fury like the world has never seen” if it continued threatening the United States was a remarkable escalation of military rhetoric with little precedent in the modern era, historians and analysts said.

Mr. Trump’s menacing remarks echoed the tone and cadence of President Harry S. Truman, who, in a 1945 address announcing that the United States had dropped a
nuclear bomb on Hiroshima, urged the Japanese to surrender, warning that if they did not, "they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth."

It is not clear whether Mr. Trump intended the historical parallel — White House officials did not respond to questions about how much planning went into his brief statement, or what was intended by the alliterative language — but it was a stark break with decades of more measured presidential responses to brewing foreign conflicts.

"It's hard to think of a president using more extreme language during crisis like this before," said Michael Beschloss, a presidential historian. "Presidents usually try to use language that is even more moderate than what they may be feeling in private, because they've always been worried that their language might escalate a crisis."

Mr. Truman delivered his muscular message at a time when the United States had an overwhelming military advantage over Japan, which did not have a nuclear weapon; Mr. Trump's threat was aimed instead at a government that has developed nuclear weapons and has been testing intercontinental ballistic missiles.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower used to say that the more shell the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev was in the language he used against the United States — promising "we will bury you" and "we're turning out missiles like sausages" — the more tempered he would be, Mr. Beschloss said.

President John F. Kennedy was similarly restrained in his rhetoric in the run-up to the Cuban missile crisis, which was prompted by the discovery that missile sites were being constructed by the Soviet Union in Cuba, Mr. Beschloss said. In an address on Oct. 22, 1962, he called upon Khrushchev "to halt and eliminate this clandestine, reckless and provocative threat to world peace and to stable relations between our two nations" and "move the world back from the abyss of destruction." As for the United States, Kennedy said, "the greatest danger of all would be to do nothing."

Mr. Trump's statement, delivered from his Bedminster, N.J., golf resort, went far beyond the usual tough-but-vague language that past presidents have used to confront North Korea's frequent provocations.

Their responses — full of strong condemnations and recognition of grave threats — have mostly left out the fiery, nationalistic language favored by the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, and his father, Kim Jong-il, before him. Mr. Trump's, by contrast, seemed to have adopted it.

"This is a little bit more jingoistic, and it borrows a little bit from the tone of the North Koreans," said Peter Feaver, who helped shape President George W. Bush's message as an adviser on his National Security Council staff.

Mr. Feaver, now a political science professor at Duke, compared Mr. Trump's choice of words to comments that Mr. Bush made in 2003 about Iraqi militants targeting American troops in Iraq.

"There are some who feel like that the conditions are such that they can attack us there. My answer is bring 'em on," Mr. Bush said then, in remarks he later said had been ill advised, much like his declaration that he wanted to capture Saddam Hussein "dead or alive."

The similarities to Pyongyang's over-the-top rhetoric prompted rebukes from senior Democratic lawmakers who said they feared Mr. Trump was blithely marching the United States closer to a costly war.

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin of Maryland, the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, said that Mr. Trump's comments showed that he "lacks the temperament and judgment to deal with the serious crisis the United States confronts."

"We should not be engaging in the same kind of blustery and provocative statements as North Korea about nuclear war," Mr. Cardin added.

Mr. Trump is well known for using harsh language, threats and taunts against adversaries when it comes to domestic matters, often using his Twitter feed as a weapon. But he has mostly been more careful on the international front, leaving his utterances about North Korea vague, though last month he ridiculed Mr. Kim after one of his missile launches, saying, "Does this guy have anything better to do with his life?"

Victor Cha, a former National Security Council official who holds the Korea chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the closest an American president had come to Mr. Trump's bellicose language was when Bill Clinton declared in 1993 during a speech in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea that if Pyongyang ever used nuclear weapons, "it would be the end of their country."

"I take Trump's statement in the same spirit," Mr. Cha said, describing the president's comments not as the promise of an American attack but as a warning of the consequences if the North were to use a nuclear weapon or intercontinental ballistic missile. It sounded, Mr. Cha said, like "a message of deterrence, which is important now to avoid any miscalculation."

Mr. Feaver said the explosive statement put Mr. Trump on a "risky path" because of its potential to inflame Mr. Kim, but was in keeping with his penchant for upending the established protocols of diplomacy in efforts to bring about a better outcome.

"They may be saying, 'Look, we have a 30-year record of bipartisan failure on this issue, so let's flip the script and give North Korea a bit of its own medicine and see if we can get a different result,'" Mr. Feaver said.

But breaking with tradition can have perilous consequences when bombs and missiles are involved.

"If this was impulsive, that would be very much out of the history of the presidency on matters like this," Mr. Beschloss said. "You don't have presidents blustering out things when lives are at stake, and if that is what it was, it would be scary."

**N Korea crisis: Where do we go after 'fire and fury'?**

By PJ Crowley
Former US Assistant Secretary of State

In the escalating war of words between the United States and North Korea, one assumes that Kim Jong-un's propaganda machine is now working overtime. After threatening revenge "a thousand fold" in response to United Nations sanctions over its destabilising march towards a nuclear capability, how can Pyongyang top President Donald
Trump’s return volley, through which he pledged “fire and fury like the world has never seen” if North Korea continues to threaten the United States?

First, let’s put this latest exchange in context. How much of this have we experienced before? And to what extent are we beginning to break new and dangerous ground?

Terminology surrounding North Korea has always seemed backwards. The end of the Korean War in 1953 technically represented a cessation of hostilities between the two sides. But in reality there has been open hostility ever since.

Media caption
President Trump threatened a response ‘like the world has never seen’

The US and North Korea came very close to armed conflict in 1994 after Pyongyang refused to allow international inspectors access to its nuclear facilities as required under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

That crisis was resolved diplomatically, but it set the stage for a two-decade cat and mouse game where North Korea paid lip service to its pledge to denuclearise, Pyongyang wanted normal relations and nuclear weapons. Without admitting it, the US policy became containment, preventing North Korea from exporting its nuclear know-how while hoping that its erratic regime would implode before it actually obtained a nuclear deterrent.

Ultimate insurance policy

In recent years, two key developments changed the basic contours of the North Korea problem.

First, the removals of Saddam Hussein by the Bush administration and Muammar Gaddafi by the Obama administration - two leaders who contemplated nuclear weapons but didn’t actually build them - led Pyongyang to a simple conclusion: an actual nuclear capability is the ultimate regime insurance policy.

And second, Kim Jong-il passed away in late 2011. The elder Kim was sufficiently deferential to his primary benefactor, China, that he maintained plausible deniability as to North Korea’s actual nuclear capability. Kim Jong-un, his son and successor, has abandoned all pretence and is openly racing to obtain a demonstrated nuclear deterrent.

Image copyright
AFP

Image caption
There is growing alarm in South Korea as tensions rise between Washington and Pyongyang

The Trump administration must decide what it can and cannot live with, and what to do about a situation that is rapidly moving from bad to worse.

To his credit, even as a candidate, President Trump placed the North Korea issue at or near the top of his list of national security concerns. And he has consistently called on China, North Korea’s leading trading partner, to do more to rein in its client state.

On the other hand, Mr Trump has underestimated the risk and complexity surrounding the North Korea problem. While he vowed early in his tenure that he would solve it one way or another, he ignored the reality that there are no good policy options available.

At one level, President Trump’s threat of fire and fury is not new. In many different forms, albeit not as colourful, the US has always said that if North Korea ever attacks, the regime will cease to exist. That said, Mr Trump’s rhetoric seemed to suggest that he was prepared to take pre-emptive action if North Korea gets closer to an actual nuclear deterrent.

But any use of force immediately places hundreds of thousands of South Koreans and Japanese citizens at risk. North Korea will almost certainly respond to a pre-emptive attack.

What is different about this cycle is the lack of a diplomatic process that could serve as a firebreak.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in a recent media briefing that the United States is open to dialogue with North Korea, provided talks are about ending missile tests and giving up nuclear weapons. Pyongyang, even as it confronts new sanctions, is unlikely to agree to those conditions.

While China welcomed Mr Tillerson’s gesture, North Korea’s young leader doesn’t seem to care what Beijing thinks. And the next move is his.

The danger is that at some point, the over-heated rhetoric creates an action-reaction cycle without an obvious reverse gear.

They fire a missile. We slap on more sanctions. They promise revenge. We declare these threats intolerable. They fire another missile. Then what?

This is where rhetoric meets strategy. But it’s unclear if there is one behind Trump’s fire and fury.

PJ Crowley is a former US Assistant Secretary of State and author of Red Line: America Foreign Policy in a Time of Fractured Politics and Failing States.

North Korea says considering missile strike on Guam
North Korea has said it is considering carrying out missile strikes on the US Pacific territory of Guam.

The report in state media, quoting an earlier military statement, came hours after President Donald Trump threatened North Korea with "fire and fury".

The North's official news agency said it was considering a plan to fire medium-to-long-range rockets at Guam, where US strategic bombers are based.

The exchanges mark a sharp rise in rhetoric between the two countries.

The North Korea crisis in 300 words

Analysis: Where do we go after 'fire and fury'?

The UN recently approved further economic sanctions on North Korea, which Pyongyang said were a "violent violation of our sovereignty", warning the US would "pay a price".

On Wednesday, the official KCNA news agency said North Korea was "carefully examining the operational plan for making an enveloping fire at the areas around Guam" using its domestically made medium-to-long-range Hwasong-12 missiles.

While not confirmed, this was seen as one of the last obstacles to North Korea being a fully nuclear armed state.

A report in the Washington Post, citing US intelligence officials, suggested North Korea is developing nuclear weapons capable of hitting the US at a much faster rate than expected.

A Japanese government defence white paper also said the weapons programme had "advanced considerably" and that North Korea possibly now had nuclear weapons.
In response, President Trump warned North Korea to stop threatening the US, saying they would be “met with fire and fury like the world has never seen”. However, veteran US Senator John McCain was sceptical about Mr Trump’s statement, saying he was “not sure that President Trump is ready to act”.

Analysis: Words with consequences?
Anthony Zurcher, BBC News, Washington:
Donald Trump said that North Korean leader Kim Jong-un “has been very threatful, beyond a normal statement”. So he responded with language that goes well beyond a normal statement for any US president.
Perhaps Mr Trump believes that no hyperbolic threats should go unmatched or that apocalyptic warnings are the only ones the North Korean leadership will understand. Perhaps he - intentionally or not - is pursuing a Nixonian “madman” style foreign policy, where adversaries will tread lightly to avoid triggering the wrath of an unpredictable US commander-in-chief.
When the leader of the world’s greatest superpower, the only nation ever to have used nuclear weapons on an enemy, talks of unprecedented “fire and fury”, however, those words have consequences.
DURING his presidential campaign Mr Trump criticised his predecessor Barack Obama for not enforcing a red line against Syria’s use of chemical weapons. Now President Trump has drawn a fiery bright line of his own with North Korea - one that could commit the US to a perilous course of action if his words go unheeded.
North Korea had reacted angrily after the fresh sanctions were announced on Saturday by the UN, in an attempt to pressure it into giving up its nuclear ambitions.
The sanctions aim to reduce North Korea’s export revenues by a third. KCNA said North Korea would retaliate and make “the US pay a price” for drafting the new measures. It called the sanctions a “violent violation of our sovereignty”, the news agency said.
China, which is Pyongyang’s closest ally, has said it is “100%” committed to enforcing the latest round of sanctions.
Russia and China have previously differed with others on how to handle Pyongyang, but in recent months have joined calls for North Korea to stop its missile tests - while also urging the US and South Korea to halt military drills, and withdraw an anti-missile system from the South.

North Korea now making missile-ready nuclear weapons, U.S. analysts say

A confidential assessment by the Defense Intelligence Agency says that North Korea has already developed a miniaturized nuclear weapon that can fit on top of an ICBM. (The Washington Post)
By Joby Warrick, Ellen Nakashima and Anna Fifield
August 8 at 4:04 PM
North Korea has successfully produced a miniaturized nuclear warhead small enough to fit inside its missiles. It is a vital stepping stone for US operations, giving access to potential flashpoints like the South China Sea, the Koreas and the Taiwan Straits.

Play Video 0:54
Report: North Korea successfully produced a nuclear warhead.
North Korea says it won't give up nuclear weapons

While more than a decade has passed since North Korea’s first nuclear detonation, many analysts believed it would be years before the country’s weapons scientists could design a compact warhead that could be delivered by missile to distant targets. But the new assessment, a summary document dated July 28, concludes that this critical milestone has already been reached.

Estimated nuclear warheads

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<th>Russia</th>
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Experts estimate 30 to 60 nuclear warheads.

Sources: Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists Nuclear Notebook, Federation of American Scientists, Defense Intelligence Agency

"The IC [intelligence community] assesses North Korea has produced nuclear weapons for ballistic missile delivery, to include delivery by ICBM-class missiles," the assessment states, in an excerpt read to The Washington Post. The assessment’s broad conclusions were verified by two U.S. officials familiar with the document. It is not yet known whether the reclusive regime has successfully tested the smaller design, although North Korea officially last year claimed to have done so.

The DIA and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence declined to comment.

An assessment this week by the Japanese Ministry of Defense also concludes there is evidence to suggest that North Korea has achieved miniaturization.

President Trump, speaking at an event at his Bedminster, N.J. gold course, said North Korea will face a devastating response if its threats continue.

"They will be met with the fire and fury and frankly power, the likes of which this world has never seen before," Trump said.

Earlier Tuesday, North Korea described a new round of United Nations sanctions as an attempt "to strangle a nation" and warned that in response "physical action will be taken mercilessly with the mobilization of all its national strength."

Kim Jong Un is becoming increasingly confident in the reliability of his nuclear arsenal, analysts have concluded, explaining perhaps the dictator’s willingness to engage in defiant behavior, including missile tests that have drawn criticism even from North Korea’s closest ally, China. On Saturday, both China and Russia joined other members of the U.N. Security Council in approving punishing new economic sanctions, including a ban on exports that supply up to a third of North Korea’s annual $3 billion earnings.
The nuclear progress further raises the stakes for President Trump, who has vowed that North Korea will never be allowed to threaten the United States with nuclear weapons. In an interview broadcast Saturday on MSNBC's Hugh Hewitt Show, national security adviser H.R. McMaster said the prospect of a North Korea armed with nuclear-tipped ICBMs would be "intolerable, from the president's perspective."

"We have to provide all options ... and that includes a military option," he said. But McMaster said the administration would do everything short of war to "pressure Kim Jong Un and those around him, such that they conclude it is in their interest to denuclearize." The options said to be under discussion ranged from new multilateral negotiations to reintroducing U.S. battlefield nuclear weapons to the Korean Peninsula, officials familiar with internal discussions said.

Determining the precise makeup of North Korea's nuclear arsenal has long been a difficult challenge for intelligence professionals because of the regime's culture of extreme secrecy and insularity. The country's weapons scientists have conducted five nuclear tests since 2006, the latest being a 20- to 30-kiloton detonation on Sept. 9, 2016, that produced a blast estimated to be up to twice that of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

But producing a compact nuclear warhead that can fit inside a missile is a technically demanding feat, one that many analysts believed was still beyond North Korea's grasp. Last year, state-run media in Pyongyang displayed a spherical device that government spokesmen described as a miniaturized nuclear warhead, but whether it was a real bomb remained unclear. North Korean officials described the September detonation as a successful test of a small warhead designed to fit on a missile, though many experts were skeptical of the claim.

Kim has repeatedly proclaimed his intention to field a fleet of nuclear-tipped ICBMs as a guarantor of his regime's survival. His regime took a major step toward that goal last month with the first successful tests of a missile with intercontinental range. Video analysis of the latest test led some analysts to conclude that the missile caught fire and disintegrated as it plunged back toward Earth's surface, suggesting North Korea's engineers might not yet be capable of building a reentry vehicle that can carry the warhead safely through the upper atmosphere. But U.S. analysts and many independent experts believe that this hurdle will be overcome by late next year.

"What initially looked like a slow-motion Cuban missile crisis is now looking more like the Manhattan Project, just barreling
along," said Robert Litwak, a nonproliferation expert at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and author of "Preventing North Korea's Nuclear Breakout," published by the center this year. "There's a sense of urgency behind the program that is new to the Kim Jong Un era."

While few discount North Korea's progress, some prominent U.S. experts warned against the danger of overestimating the threat. Siegfried Hecker, director emeritus of the Los Alamos National Laboratory and the last known U.S. official to personally inspect North Korea's nuclear facilities, has calculated the size of North Korea's arsenal at no more than 20 to 25 bombs. Hecker warned of potential risks that can come from making Kim into a bigger menace than he actually is.

"Overselling is particularly dangerous," said Hecker, who visited North Korea seven times between 2004 and 2010 and met with key leaders of the country's weapons programs. "Some like to depict Kim as being crazy — a madman — and that makes the public believe that the guy is undeterrable. He's not crazy and he's not suicidal. And he's not even unpredictable."

"The real threat," Hecker said, "is we're going to stumble into a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula."

In the past, U.S. intelligence agencies have occasionally overestimated the North Korean threat. In the early 2000s, the George W. Bush administration assessed that Pyongyang was close to developing an ICBM that could strike the U.S. mainland — a prediction that missed the mark by more than a decade. More recently, however, analysts and policymakers have been taken repeatedly by surprise as North Korea achieved key milestones months or years ahead of schedule, noted Jeffrey Lewis, director of the Center for Nonproliferation Studies' East Asia Nonproliferation Program. There was similar skepticism about China's capabilities in the early 1960s, said Lewis, who has studied that country's pathway to a successful nuclear test in 1964.

"There is no reason to think that the North Koreans aren't making the same progress after so many successful nuclear explosions," Lewis said. "The big question is why do we hold the North Koreans to a different standard than we held [Joseph] Stalin's Soviet Union or Mao Zedong's China? North Korea is testing underground, so we're always going to lack a lot of details. But it seems to me a lot of people are insisting on impossible levels of proof because they simply don't want to accept what should be pretty obvious."

Fifield reported from Krabi, Thailand. Yuki Oda in Tokyo contributed to this report.

North Korea vows to retaliate against US over sanctions
North Korea has vowed to retaliate and make "the US pay a price" for drafting fresh UN sanctions over its banned nuclear weapons programme.

The sanctions, which were unanimously passed by the UN on Saturday, were a "violent violation of our sovereignty," the official KCNA news agency said.

Separately, South Korea says the North has rejected an offer to restart talks, dismissing it as insincere.

The sanctions will aim to reduce North Korea's export revenues by a third.

The UN Security Council decision followed repeated missile tests by the North which have escalated tensions on the peninsula.

In its first major response on Monday, North Korea insisted that it would continue to develop its controversial nuclear weapons programme.

The state-run KCNA news agency said Pyongyang would "not put our self-defensive nuclear deterrent on the negotiating table" while it faces threats from the US.

It threatened to make the US "pay the price for its crime... thousands of times," referring to America's role in drafting the UN sanctions resolution.

Speaking to reporters at a regional forum in the Philippine capital, Manila, North Korean spokesman Bang Kwang Hyeok said: "The worsening situation on the Korean peninsula, as well as the nuclear issues, were caused by the United States.

"We affirm that we'll never place our nuclear and ballistic missiles programme on the negotiating table, and won't budge an inch on strengthening nuclear armament."

Can the US defend itself against North Korea?

N Korea: The possible solutions

The remarks come after reports emerged that the North and South Korean foreign ministers had met briefly on Sunday evening on the sidelines of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) summit in Manila.

South Korean media reported that its Foreign Minister, Kang Kyung-wha, shook hands with her North Korean counterpart, Ri Yong Ho, in a brief and unarranged meeting at an official dinner event.

A South Korean official told the BBC that Mr Ri had dismissed Ms Kang's offer of talks as "insincere".

The foreign minister of China, which is Pyongyang's closest ally, told journalists on Monday: "My feeling is that the North did not entirely reject the positive proposals raised by the South."

Wang Yi added that China also supported the South's initiatives, and was "100%" committed to enforcing the latest round of UN sanctions.

What are the new sanctions?

The one place the US and N Korea meet

Importing coal, seafood, iron and iron ore, lead and lead ore from North Korea is banned
Countries cannot receive new North Korean workers
No new joint ventures with North Korean entities or individuals
No new investment in existing joint ventures
More individuals targeted with travel bans and assets freezes
Member states to report to the UN Security Council within 90 days on how they have implemented resolution

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is also at the Asean forum, where he spoke about North Korea.

Noting Russia and China's participation in the unanimous vote, he told journalists it was clear there was now "no daylight among the international community" on their desire for North Korea to stop its tests.

"The best signal that North Korea can give us [is] that they are prepared to talk would be to stop these missile launches," he added.

Russia and China have previously differed with others on how to handle Pyongyang, but in recent months have joined calls for North Korea to stop its missile tests - while also urging the US and South Korea to halt military drills, and withdraw an anti-missile system from the South.
The second test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) on Friday, celebrated by North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, was the latest to be conducted in defiance of a UN ban.

"We're not your enemy, we're not your threat but you're presenting an unacceptable threat to us and we have to respond," said Mr Tillerson, referring to the border between the Koreas.

"We do not seek a regime change, we do not seek the 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," US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said, adding that the US wanted a dialogue at some point.

China's ambassador, Liu Jieyi, said the resolution showed that the world was "united in its position regarding the nuclear position on the Korean peninsula".

He welcomed US statements that it was not seeking regime change or prioritising the reunification of Korea.

China, North Korea's only international ally and a veto-wielding member of the UN Security Council, voted in favour of the resolution this time. It has often protected Pyongyang from harmful resolutions in the past.

The US ambassador said the Security Council had increased the penalty for North Korea's ballistic missile activity "to a whole new level".

"Today the Security Council has come together to put the North Korean dictator on notice," Ms Haley told the council after the vote.

The US government is not seeking a regime change in North Korea, the secretary of state says, amid tensions over Pyongyang's weapons programme.

"We're not your enemy," Rex Tillerson said, adding that the US wanted a dialogue at some point.

Meanwhile, a senior Republican senator said President Trump considered going to war with North Korea as an option.

On Monday, US President Donald Trump spoke to his South Korean counterpart Moon Jae-in over the phone about relations on the Korean peninsula.

They agreed that North Korea "poses a grave and growing direct threat" and the two leaders were committed to fully implementing the latest round of UN sanctions, the White House said in a statement.

North Korea: US not seeking regime change, says Rex Tillerson

"We're not your enemy," Rex Tillerson said, adding that the US wanted a dialogue at some point.

Meanwhile, a senior Republican senator said President Trump considered going to war with North Korea as an option.

"We do not seek a regime change, we do not seek the 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," said Mr Tillerson, referring to the border between the Koreas.

"We're not your enemy, we're not your threat but you're presenting an unacceptable threat to us and we have to respond."
Analysis: No good options and little time
Barbara Plett Usher, State Department Correspondent

North Korea's recent long-range missile tests have deepened concern about the threat Pyongyang poses to the US mainland, and strengthened determination here to prevent any strike.

That's what the president had in mind in his war talk with Senator Lindsey Graham.

The Pentagon has updated military options, but at the same time says a confrontation would be catastrophic. In light of that, Mr Tillerson repeated at length that the US wasn’t seeking regime change and said the goal was dialogue, but one not based on the assumption that North Korea could keep its nuclear weapons.

Pyongyang has categorically refused such terms.

The strategy, said Mr Tillerson, is a sustained campaign of peaceful but intensifying economic pressure to change its mind. But given the advances in ballistic technology demonstrated by the recent ICBM tests, there's growing doubt that denuclearisation is a realistic possibility.

As always, there are no good options when it comes to North Korea, but less time to pursue them.

President Trump has repeatedly criticised China, which shares a land border with North Korea and is its closest economic ally, for not doing enough to stop Pyongyang’s weapons programme.

However, Mr Tillerson took a more diplomatic approach, saying that “only the North Koreans are to blame for this situation.”

“I believe him,” he added, “we do believe China has a special and unique relationship, because of this significant economic activity, to influence the North Korean regime in ways that no one else can.”

In a separate development, Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said that Mr Trump told him that there would be a war between the two countries if Pyongyang continued with its aim to develop a missile programme with the US in its range.

“Mr Trump said of his conversations with the president in an interview with NBC's Today programme.

“He has told me that,” Mr Graham said of his conversations with the president. “He has told me that to my face.”

Despite the ongoing tests, most experts believe Pyongyang does not yet have the capability to miniaturise a nuclear warhead, fit it on to a long-range missile, and ensure it is protected until delivery to the target.

They say many of North Korea’s missiles cannot accurately hit targets.

Others, however, believe that at the rate it is going, Pyongyang may overcome these challenges and develop a nuclear weapon within five to 10 years that could strike the US.

US slams North Korea missile test as Kim claims 'whole US mainland' in range

By Brad Lendon, CNN

Updated 1130 GMT (1930 HKT) July 29, 2017

Story highlights

North Korea's latest missile could have the range to hit Los Angeles and Chicago

US should regard the launch as a 'grave warning,' Pyongyang says

North Korea tested an intercontinental ballistic missile Friday that appears to have the range to hit major US cities, experts say, and prompted a fresh round of condemnation from the United States, China, Japan and South Korea.

A combination of US, South Korean and Japanese analyses of the launch from Mupyong-ni, near North Korea’s border with China, shows the missile flew about 45 minutes, going 3,700 kilometers (2,300 miles) high and for a distance of 1,000 kilometers (621 miles).

If the missile were fired on a flatter, standard trajectory, it would have major US cities like Los Angeles, Denver and Chicago well within its range, with possibly the ability to reach as far as New York and Boston, according to David Wright, a missile expert at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

However, early analysis of Friday’s test cannot determine how heavy a payload the missile was carrying in its warhead, Wright said. The heavier the payload, the shorter the range.
South Korea's joint chiefs of staff said they estimate that the intercontinental ballistic missile tested Friday is more advanced than one launched earlier this month based on the range it traveled. Experts had said that test showed Pyongyang had the ability to hit Alaska.

US President Donald Trump condemned the missile launch and said the US would act to ensure its security.

"Threatening the world, these weapons and tests further isolate North Korea, weaken its economy, and deprive its people," Trump said in a written statement. "The United States will take all necessary steps to ensure the security of the American homeland and protect our allies in the region."

Kim: 'Whole US mainland' within reach

Pyongyang's state-run Korean Central News Agency said Saturday that the latest missile launch was a Hwasong-14, the same missile tested earlier in the month. Friday's test was designed to show the Hwasong-14's maximum range with a "large-sized heavy nuclear warhead," it said, adding that Washington should regard the launch as a "grave warning."

North Korean state media was quick to tout the missile test as a success, with video and stills showing Kim Jong Un overseeing the launch and celebrating with the troops involved.

Expert: North Korea will continue to improve

Kim is quoted as saying "the whole US mainland" is now within North Korea's reach. He called Pyongyang's weapons program "a precious asset" that cannot be reversed nor replaced, according to KCNA.

The chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Joseph F. Dunford, Jr., and the commander of US Pacific Command, Adm. Harry Harris, called the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Lee Sun Jin in the wake of North Korea's test to express the US' "ironclad commitment" to its alliance with South Korea and discuss military response options.

Hours after that call, the US and South Korean military conducted a live fire exercise as a show of force in response to the missile test, according to Pentagon spokesman Capt. Jeff Davis. The exercise included firing missiles into the ocean.

Both militaries conducted a similar show of force after North Korea's first ICBM test in early July.

If North Korea's claims about Friday's test are true, Pyongyang may be even further advanced in its missile program than was previously thought. Earlier in the week, a US official told CNN that the US believed that North Korea would be able to launch a reliable nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile by early 2018.

However, the official clarified to CNN that while North Korea can currently get a missile "off the ground," there are still a lot of undetermined variables about guidance, reentry and the ability to hit a specific target.

China condemns launch

China, a longtime North Korean ally, issued a statement Saturday condemning Friday's missile launch and asked Pyongyang to "stop taking actions that would escalate..."
North Korea’s missile tests by the numbers

“The UN Security Council has clear regulations on North Korea’s launch activities that use ballistic missile technologies. China is opposed to North Korea’s launch activities in violation of UN Security Council resolutions and against the will of the international community,” Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said.

Beijing’s statement reiterated its long-held position on North Korea’s missile program.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said China and Russia need to do more to stop North Korea’s missile program.

“As the principal economic enablers of North Korea’s nuclear weapon and ballistic missile development program, China and Russia bear unique and special responsibility for this growing threat to regional and global stability,” Tillerson said in a statement.

After speaking with Tillerson on Saturday, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida said Tokyo would join Washington in new appeals to China and Russia to stop North Korea’s missile program.

The missile splashed down about 200 kilometers (120 miles) west of the Shakotan Peninsula of Japan’s northernmost main island of Hokkaido, well within Japan’s Exclusive Economic Zone, Kishida said.

Not everyone agrees that North Korea launched an ICBM. The Russian Defense Ministry said its tracking indicated the weapon was a “medium-range ballistic missile,” Russian state news agency TASS reported Friday.

Nuclear-capable missile?

Michael Elleman of the International Institute for Strategic Studies estimated a range of at least 9,500 km (5,900 miles) for the missile, according to Reuters news agency -- less than that estimated by Wright, but still potentially putting Los Angeles within reach.

North Korean missile classified as “brand new” 02:10

“The key here is that North Korea has a second successful test in less than one month,” he said. “If this trend holds, they could establish an acceptably reliable ICBM before year’s end.”

2017 has been a year of rapid progress for North Korea’s missile program.

Pyongyang has carried out 12 missile tests since February and conducted its first-ever test of an ICBM on July 4 -- which it claims could reach “anywhere in the world.”

“North Korea is slowly morphing into a nuclear and missile power right before our very eyes,” said Harry J. Kazianis, director of defense studies at the Center for the National Interest and an expert on North Korea.

“North Korea will continue to test over and over again its missile technology and nuclear weapons in the months and years to come in order to develop the most lethal systems it can,” Kazianis said. “You can bet every time they do tensions will continue to rise. This is what makes the situation on the Korean Peninsula as dangerous as it is.”

Trump urged to respond

Less than six years into his reign, Kim Jong Un has tested more missiles than his father and grandfather combined.
The North Korea threat: What can Trump do?

His country’s latest test has spurred calls for a response from the Trump administration.

“North Korea’s latest missile test shows the Trump administration’s actions are not changing North Korea’s behavior and it’s time for the President to articulate a comprehensive strategy to the American people -- so far he’s failed to do that,” Democratic Rep. Ted Lieu told CNN on Friday.

Trump administration officials have warned that “all options are on the table” but a clear path forward has yet to materialize.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute who specializes in foreign policy, told CNN that North Korea’s missile launch shows its leaders are “absolutely committed to their missile programs” and not interested in tempering their activities.

Bandow, who visited North Korea just last month, said the regime is convinced that developing its missile program as a nuclear deterrent is absolutely necessary. This, he said, is a mindset that continues to put pressure on Trump, who finds himself in a situation with no good choices.

North Korea says missile test shows all US within range

North Korea has hailed as a success its latest test of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), describing it as a “stern warning” for the US.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said the test proved that the entire US was within striking range, state media reported.

The launch came three weeks after North Korea’s first ICBM test.

US President Donald Trump called it “only the latest reckless and dangerous action by the North Korean regime”.

China also condemned the missile test but urged “all parties concerned” to exercise restraint “and avoid intensifying tensions”.

Confirming the launch, the North said the ICBM flew for just over 47 minutes and reached an altitude of 3,724km (2,300 miles).

It said the launch had “successfully tested re-entry capabilities” of the missile.

“The leader said proudly the test also confirmed all the US mainland is within our striking range,” the Korean Central News Agency said.

The statement said that the rocket was a Hwasong-14, the same model North Korea tested on 3 July.
North Korea's latest ICBM test went farther and higher than their previous 3 July test, meaning that they may be able to strike even deeper into the heartland of the United States than initially assessed.

Within minutes of the launch, South Korean, Japanese and US officials reported data about the location, range, apogee, and flight time of the missile. While full analysis has not been finalised yet, several points stand out.

First, the data available indicates that the missile may have a range of approximately 10,400km. Since this missile is road-mobile, a launch from the north-eastern city of Rason would put New York City in range of the ICBM.

Second, the US reported that North Korea launched the ICBM from Mupyong-ni, North Korea. This location was different from many press accounts leading up to the launch which predicted a Kusong launch. The missile launched at 23:11 local time, an unusual time for North Korea's tests as well. It is possible that North Korea is already experimenting with deploying the missile under the cover of night or setting up multiple launch sites to confuse observers.

In response, the US and South Korean military conducted a live-firing exercise using surface-to-surface missiles, a US defence official said.

The missiles were fired into the "territorial waters of South Korea along the east coast," a US military statement said.

South Korean Defence Minister Song Young-moo said the country would prepare independent measures to curb the North Korea threat, speeding up the deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defence system (THAAD) provided by the US.

The Pentagon said the latest missile was launched at 23:41 (15:41 GMT) from an arms plant in Jagang province in the north of the country.

It is unusual for North Korea to launch a missile at night - the significance is as yet unclear. No missiles had been fired from Jagang province before, indicating a previously-unknown launch site is operational.

ICBMs can reach altitudes well outside the earth's atmosphere. Using sharp trajectories with high altitudes allows North Korea to avoid firing over neighbouring countries.

In response, the US, Japan and South Korea roundly condemned the latest action by Pyongyang.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the threat to his country's security was "grave and real" while Pentagon spokesman Capt Jeff Davis said the US was prepared to defend itself "and our allies from any attack or provocation."

South Korea's President Moon Jae-in convened an emergency security meeting for the middle of the night.

Despite the ongoing tests, experts believe the North does not yet have the capability to miniaturise a nuclear warhead, fit it on to a long-range missile, and ensure it is protected until delivery to the target.

They say many of North Korea's missiles cannot accurately hit targets.

Others, however, believe that at the rate it is going, Pyongyang may overcome these challenges and develop a nuclear weapon within five to 10 years that could strike the US.