

North Korea in 2017: Donald Trump's Failures

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Table of Contents

Introduction

[Urgency](#) of Solving North Korean Problem

Why a pre-emptive [military strike](#) is *not* a viable option
[way forward](#), how to solve problem

List of United Nations Security Council [Resolutions](#) on North Korea

List of North Korean [nuclear weapons tests](#)

List of North Korean [missile tests](#) during 2017

[March 2017](#) U.S. policy on North Korea

[April 2017: U.S.S. Vinson](#) to Korea

U.S.S. Vinson actually went to [Australia](#)

Trump's policy of [maximum pressure](#) (14 April 2017)

[1 May 2017: Trump's offer to negotiate](#)

[June-July 2017: North Korean Situation Worsens](#)

[Quest for Sanctions on North Korea](#) after 4 July ICBM test

Trump's policy on North Korea [bounces inconsistently](#)

[8-31 July 2017: Continuing North Korean Problem](#)

[August 2017](#)

U.N. Response to 29 August missile test

U.S. Navy incompetent

[September 2017](#)

U.N. Response to 3 Sep nuclear weapon test

U.N. experts say North Korea [evaded](#) sanctions

[4-15 September](#)

U.N. Response to 14 Sep missile test

[16-30 September](#)

[October 2017](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Introduction

In January 2017, I began writing an essay at www.rbs0.com/trump.pdf that chronicled factual errors by Donald Trump, as well as chronicled some other evidence that Trump was

unfit to be president of the USA. Part of that essay was a section on Trump's response to tests of ballistic missiles by North Korea. When that one section on North Korea grew to 33 pages, on 12 August 2017, I made that section into this separate essay.

This essay is focused on Trump's failure to stop the North Korean nuclear weapons program and ICBM program. I document the Trump administration's inconsistent and amateurish attempts to solve the North Korean problem.

Introduction to North Korea Problem

There can be little doubt that North Korea is one of the worst rogue nations in the world. The North Korean history of illegal acts during 1950-2007 is documented in a [report](#) by the U.S. Congressional Research Service. The North Korean army has approximately one million men, making it one of the largest armies in the world. The North Koreans are known to have a large stockpile of chemical weapons. Beginning in 1993, the North Koreans pursued a program of developing nuclear weapons, and they tested their first atomic bomb in October 2006. The North Koreans also have a program to develop intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) that will be able to deliver their nuclear weapons to the U.S. mainland.

For more detail, see webpages from the following nonprofit organizations:

- [Nuclear Threat Initiative](#).
- [38North](#), U.S.-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University.
- [Arms Control Association](#), Chronology of U.S.-North Korean Nuclear and Missile Diplomacy.
- [James Martin Center](#) for Nonproliferation Studies at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies in Monterey, California.

Negotiations and Sanctions Both Failed

The governments of the USA, South Korea, Japan, as well as the United Nations, responded to this North Korean aggressive weapons program in two ways. First, there were negotiations (e.g., so-called six-party talks with China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the USA). Second, the United Nations passed economic sanctions on North Korea, as described [below](#).

North Korea has been an unreliable negotiating partner, because they have violated every agreement. For example, during 1991-2007 there were intermittent, tortuous negotiations with North Korea to prevent production of plutonium at their Yongbyon reactor. The North Koreans allowed IAEA inspectors into North Korea after agreements were signed and the U.S. provided food, fuel oil, or other humanitarian aid to North Korea. But after North Korea received the benefit of the bargain, North Korea expelled the IAEA inspectors on 27 Dec 2002 and again on 16 April 2009. Plutonium from that reactor's fuel rods was used as an ingredient in North Korea's atomic bombs.

As another example, there was a manufacturing plant in Kaesong, North Korea that used cheap North Korean labor to produce goods for South Korean companies. The plant operated intermittently beginning in 2005, but was permanently closed in February 2016.

The most recent six-party negotiations ended in April 2009, when the North Korean delegation walked out, in response to the United Nations Security Council's [condemnation](#) of the North Korean launch of a ballistic missile.

Past economic sanctions on North Korea have been ineffective, partly because China, Russia, and other rogue nations ignored the sanctions. It is also possible that more sanctions could make North Korea more isolated, more paranoid, and feeling more in need of a strong military.

The policy of the governments of the USA, South Korea, and Japan is that we will *never* accept North Korea possessing nuclear weapons. That policy is enshrined in numerous United Nations Security Council Resolutions, where the policy is expressed in a positive way as "verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula". Despite that policy, the U.S. Government has tolerated North Korea having nuclear weapons since 2006.

The U.S. Government has a second policy of *not* wanting North Korea to possess ICBMs, which could be used to threaten the USA. That "red line" began to be crossed by North Korea in July 2017, when North Korea tested two ICBMs.

Trump

In November 2016, American voters elected Trump — a man with absolutely *no* experience in government at any level — to be president of the USA. When Trump became president on 20 January 2017, the North Korean problem became Trump's problem. This section of my essay shows that Trump gave little thought to the North Korean problem before 2017.

In December 2012, when Obama was president, Trump tweeted:

We can't even stop the Norks from blasting a missile. China is laughing at us. It is really sad.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 12 Dec 2012.

In December 2012, Trump appeared to believe there was a simple solution for the North Korean problem. Trump's simplistic view of a complicated problem shows, in my opinion, that Trump was unqualified to be president of the USA.

There is only one other tweet about North Korea from Donald Trump before 1 January 2017:

China controls North Korea. So now besides cyber hacking us all day, they are using the Norks to taunt us. China is a major threat.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 12 April 2013.

Trump does *not* appear to have appreciated the seriousness of the North Korea problem until the year 2017. I searched Twitter for tweets by Trump on the dates of four North Korea's

nuclear weapons tests in the years 2009, 2013, and 2016 — and for three days after each test — but found *no* tweets by Trump on this serious problem. I also searched for tweets by Trump before 1 Jan 2017 that contained either "North Korea" or "Norks", but found only the two tweets quoted above.

In a tweet on 2 Jan 2017, Trump appeared to promise he would prevent North Korea from acquiring ICBMs that could reach the USA.

North Korea just stated that it is in the final stages of developing a nuclear weapon capable of reaching parts of the U.S. It won't happen!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 18:05 EST, 2 Jan 2017.

Trump's legendary short-attention span — together with Trump's inability to comprehend complex facts — makes it unlikely that Trump can find a good solution to the North Korean problem. Meanwhile, in late July 2017, the U.S. Military correctly warns us that time is running out to solve the North Korean problem.

Can we rely on Donald Trump — a man full of bluster and braggadocio — to stop the North Korean programs in nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles? As shown in this essay, the answer is "NO", as I describe the futile attempts of the Trump administration to stop the North Korean weapons program.

The next few sections contain detail that is relevant at many places in this essay. Rather than repeat these details throughout my essay, I am collecting the details in the following sections.

Urgency of Solving North Korean Problem

In 2017, the North Korean government is continuing to test ballistic missiles that are forbidden by multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions. In April 2017, the U.S. Government — quite rightly — also fears that the North Koreans will soon make a sixth test of a nuclear weapon. Because of the failure of past negotiations and sanctions, North Korea is becoming stronger and stronger.

The North Koreans have a long-standing plan to develop ICBMs that could hit the west coast of the USA (e.g., Seattle, San Francisco). The North Koreans have three significant technical problems to solve:

1. develop a reliable ICBM that can be launched from North Korea and hit the USA,
2. miniaturize a nuclear warhead that can be delivered by their ICBM, and
3. develop an accurate guidance system for their ICBM.

In April 2017, the U.S. Government estimates that the North Koreans can solve the first two problems by the year 2020. [New York Times](#); [Reuters](#)(28April2017); [Reuters](#)(7June2017); [Washington Post](#). But on 25 July 2017, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that North Korea could deliver nuclear weapons via ICBMs in 2018. [Washington Post](#).

Why a pre-emptive military strike

is *not* a viable option

It might seem that a pre-emptive U.S. military strike could destroy North Korea's nuclear reactors, centrifuges for separating Uranium-235 from other isotopes, other nuclear weapons manufacturing facilities, nuclear weapons test site(s), etc. Such a pre-emptive military strike is *not* a viable option, for the following reasons:

1. We do *not* know the location of all of North Korea's nuclear weapons. Some of those nuclear weapons are presumed to be stored near mobile missile launchers, to avoid a pre-emptive strike. Those hidden nuclear weapons would be available for North Korea to use in retaliation for the pre-emptive first strike.
2. North Korea has a large number of artillery and rocket launchers positioned north of Seoul, which could turn Seoul into a "sea of fire". There are more than ten million people living in Seoul whose lives would be endangered by a North Korean retaliation.
3. The huge Chinese army could come to the aid of the North Koreans, just as they did in 1950 during the Korean war. That could begin World War III.
4. South Korea is a prosperous, industrialized nation, while North Korea is an impoverished agrarian economy — that means war with North Korea will inflict more damage on South Korea than on North Korea, because there is more value in South Korea.

Statements from the South Korean government are clear that there must *not* be another war on the Korean Peninsula, which makes unacceptable any pre-emptive U.S. strike on North Korea. As long as the USA listens to South Korea, there will be *no* pre-emptive first strike on North Korea by the U.S. Military.

Way Forward (my opinion)

Because I am critical of Trump's inconsistent and ineffective policy on North Korea, permit me to sketch a policy.

From the viewpoint of the USA, North Korea is a rogue nation that has repeatedly violated United Nations Resolutions. But, if we are to avoid another war in Korea, we need to understand the North Korean position and then negotiate with North Korea.

At least since the early 1990s — perhaps earlier — the government of North Korea has misunderstood military exercises by the USA and South Korea. North Korea misunderstands these military exercises as preparations for the invasion of North Korea and the reunification of Korea. In response, North Korea has developed nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, to deter that invasion of North Korea.

I suggest a resumption of six-party (China, Japan, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, and the USA) talks with *no* preconditions.

The USA and its allies should be prepared to agree to:

1. an armistice that formally ends the Korean War.
2. ends U.S. military exercises in South Korea and also in the ocean near the Korean peninsula.
3. end aggressive displays of U.S. Military forces (e.g., bomber flights over South Korea, groups of U.S. Navy warships near Korea).
4. recognize North Korea as a sovereign nation, including exchanging ambassadors.

In exchange, North Korea should be prepared to agree to:

1. moratorium on all tests of nuclear weapons.
2. moratorium on all tests of ballistic missiles, including alleged launches of satellites.
3. allow IAEA inspectors to visit nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons manufacturing facilities in North Korea, to verify that North Korea has stopped producing nuclear weapons.

This suggested way forward is the essence of a proposal by China, but both the USA and South Korea have rejected this proposal. See, e.g., [ABC News](#)(24Apr); [BBC](#)(28Apr); [RIA-Novosti](#)(29Apr); [Associated Press](#)(4July); [Reuters](#)(4July).

An additional advantage of accepting the proposal by China is that the Chinese and Russians would be actively involved in solving the dispute, which might encourage the Chinese and Russians to obey the U.N. sanctions on North Korea and to become guarantors of North Korean compliance with the negotiated treaty.

Admittedly, North Korea has a long history of breaching or abrogating written agreements, which makes North Korean an unreliable negotiating partner. But negotiations seem the least-worst option for South Korea, Japan, and the USA.

U.S. Government Position on Negotiations with North Korea

In contrast to the Chinese proposal discussed above, when U.S. Secretary of State Tillerson mentions negotiations or talks with the North Koreans, he means the process of North Korea abandoning their nuclear weapons program and destroying their stockpile of nuclear weapons.

Tillerson's goal is futile for two reasons:

1. Since the 1990s, the North Korean government has pursued the development of nuclear weapons to deter the U.S. Military from invading North Korea. Look at this problem from the North Korean perspective: for more than twenty years they have pursued a

program of developing nuclear weapons, with great suffering of their people as scarce resources were diverted from food to nuclear weapons development. Trump's belligerent threats surely convince the North Koreans that they *need* nuclear weapons to deter aggression by the USA. Currently, North Korea — an impoverished nation — is able to threaten the USA, South Korea, and Japan. That gives North Korea a kind of respect and importance that it has never had before. Now that North Korea is on the threshold of being a significant nuclear threat, why would they suddenly abandon their cherished nuclear weapons and return to their weak position in the 1990s? If they abandon their nuclear weapons, they would also suffer a tremendous loss of face.

2. Secondly, the U.S. Government is *not* prepared to offer the North Koreans anything that they want (e.g., end to U.S. military exercises in South Korea, armistice, diplomatic recognition, etc.), so the U.S. is futilely pursuing a surrender by North Korea.

Successful negotiations require that each side give up something that it has and that the other side wants. If only one side gives up something, then the agreement is likely to be seen as unfair and the agreement is more likely to be abrogated in the future.

The U.S. State Department (e.g., Tillerson and Nikki Haley) — and sometimes also Trump himself — piously say they hope to avoid war with North Korea. But then they hypocritically demand pre-conditions on any possible future negotiations with North Korea — conditions that guarantee there will be *no* negotiations with North Korea, leaving war as the only option.

I think it is *not* realistic to ask North Korea to abandon its existing nuclear weapons (i.e., denuclearization of the Korean peninsula mentioned in various United Nations Resolutions). In my opinion, *if* the U.S. Government really wanted to stop the development of nuclear weapons by the North Koreans, then the U.S. *should* have done something *before* the North Koreans tested their first atomic bomb in October 2006. The failures of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush closed the window of opportunity to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula.

Various United Nations Security Council Resolutions call for the “complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner.” (See, e.g., Resolution 2375 at §31. I traced this phrase back to Resolution 1718 (Oct 2006) at §6.) “Complete and verifiable denuclearization” is now a dream, as explained above. How do we accomplish “irreversible denuclearization”? The North Koreans have scientists and engineers with knowledge and experience in designing and building nuclear weapons. That knowledge can *not* be erased, except by the death of those scientists and engineers. The problem with knowledge of how to make nuclear weapons is once that knowledge exists, the Genie can *not* be put back in the bottle.

List of U.N. Security Council Resolutions on Nonproliferation by North Korea

The United Nations refers to North Korea by its official name: "Democratic People's Republic of Korea" (DPRK). There is nothing democratic about the DPRK, its government is a hereditary Stalinist dictatorship.

The United Nations Security Council attempted to prohibit North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles:

1. [Resolution 825](#) (11 May 1993) Calls upon the DPRK to reconsider withdrawing from the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.
2. [Resolution 1540](#) (28 April 2004) "Decides that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery...."
3. [Resolution 1887](#) (24 Sep 2009) "Calls upon all States to refrain from conducting a nuclear test explosion and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), thereby bringing the treaty into force at an early date...."

While Resolutions 1540 and 1887 do *not* explicitly mention the DPRK, these two Resolutions are cited in many subsequent Resolutions that condemn North Korea's tests of nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles.

The United Nations Security Council condemned North Korea's tests of nuclear weapons and/or ballistic missiles:

1. [Resolution 1695](#) (15 July 2006) "Condemns the multiple launches by the DPRK of ballistic missiles on 5 July 2006 local time...."
2. [Resolution 1718](#) (14 Oct 2006) "Condemns the nuclear test proclaimed by the DPRK on 9 October 2006 in flagrant disregard of its relevant resolutions, in particular resolution 1695 (2006),"
3. [Resolution 1874](#) (12 June 2009) "Condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 25 May 2009 (local time) in violation and flagrant disregard of its relevant resolutions,"
4. [Resolution 2087](#) (22 Jan 2013) "Condemns the DPRK's launch of 12 December 2012, which used ballistic missile technology...."
5. [Resolution 2094](#) (7 March 2013) "Condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 12 February 2013 (local time) in violation and flagrant disregard of the Council's relevant resolutions...."
6. [Resolution 2270](#) (2 March 2016). "Condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 6 January 2016 in violation and flagrant disregard of the Council's relevant resolutions, and further condemns the DPRK's launch of 7 February 2016, which used ballistic missile technology and was in serious violation of resolutions...." §24 says: "Decides that the DPRK shall abandon all chemical and biological weapons and weapons-related programs,"

7. [Resolution 2321](#) (30 Nov 2016) "Condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on 9 September 2016 in violation and flagrant disregard of the Security Council's resolutions...."
8. [Resolution 2356](#) (2 June 2017) "Condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear weapons and ballistic missile development activities including a series of ballistic missile launches and other activities conducted by the DPRK since 9 September 2016 in violation and flagrant disregard of the Security Council's resolutions...."
9. [Resolution 2371](#) (5 Aug 2017) "Condemns in the strongest terms the ballistic missile launches conducted by the DPRK on 3 July and 28 July of 2017, which the DPRK has stated were launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles, and which used ballistic missile technology in violation and flagrant disregard of the Security Council's resolutions".
10. [Resolution 2375](#) (11 Sep 2017) "Condemns in the strongest terms the nuclear test conducted by the DPRK on September 2 of 2017 in violation and flagrant disregard of the Security Council's resolutions...."

There are also relevant formal statements by the president of the U.N. Security Council:

1. [S/PRST/2006/41](#) (6 Oct 2006) "The Security Council expresses its deep concern over the statement of 3 October 2006 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in which it stated that the DPRK would conduct a nuclear test in the future."
2. [S/PRST/2009/7](#) (13 April 2009) "The Security Council condemns the 5 April 2009 (local time) launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), which is in contravention of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006)."
3. [S/PRST/2012/13](#) (16 April 2012) "The Security Council strongly condemns the 13 April 2012 (local time) launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)."
4. [S/PRST/2017/16](#) (29 August 2017) "The Security Council strongly condemns the 28 August 2017 (local time) ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that flew over Japan, as well as the multiple ballistic missile launches it conducted on 25 August 2017. The Security Council further condemns the DPRK for its outrageous actions and demands that the DPRK immediately cease all such actions."
5. 15 Sep 2017 [press statement](#) "The members of the Security Council strongly condemned these launches [14 Sep and 28 Aug 2017], condemned further the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its outrageous actions, and demanded that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea immediately cease all such actions."
- 6.

North Korean Tests of Nuclear Weapons

Here is a terse list of North Korea's tests of nuclear weapons. (The dates are in Korea, which is approximately halfway around the world from Washington, DC.)

1. 9 October 2006, [USGS](#) magnitude 4.3
[New York Times](#)
2. 25 May 2009, [USGS](#) magnitude 4.7
[New York Times](#)
3. 12 February 2013, [USGS](#) magnitude 5.1
[New York Times](#)
4. 6 January 2016, [USGS](#) magnitude 5.1
[New York Times](#). [Yonhap](#) reported that the yield was 6 kilotons of TNT.
5. 9 September 2016, [USGS](#) magnitude 5.3
[New York Times](#). [Yonhap](#) reported that the yield was 10 kilotons of TNT.
6. 3 Sep 2017, [USGS](#) magnitude 6.3
[New York Times](#)
On 3 September, the South Korean government estimated the explosive yield was 50 kilotons of TNT. [Yonhap](#). The Japanese defense minister estimated the yield was 70 kilotons of TNT. [Associated Press](#). And on 13 September 2017, the [Washington Post](#) reported: “The new [analysis](#) by 38 North ... [gives a] yield of ... roughly 250 kilotons. The United States intelligence assessment put the blast at 140 kilotons, Japan at 160 kilotons and South Korea at 50 kilotons.”
- 7.

Earthquake magnitudes (i.e., the Richter scale) use base-ten logarithms, so a magnitude 6.3 quake has ten times more energy than a magnitude 5.3 quake.

The explosive yield of the October 2006 test was approximately 1 kiloton of TNT. There *may* have been earlier tests that were total failures, and were *not* detected in South Korea.

The North Koreans were slow in developing nuclear weapons. In July 1945, the USA tested its first atomic bomb in New Mexico that had a yield of 21 kilotons of TNT. In January 2016, 71 years later, the North Koreans still had *not* mastered the technical skills that the USA had in 1945 — the North Korean test in January 2016 had a yield of approximately 6 kilotons, and the earlier North Korean tests had smaller yields.

North Korean reaction to Trump: More Frequent Missile Tests

Here is a terse list of North Korea's missile tests during 2017, each of which is Trump's problem. (The dates are in Korea, which is approximately halfway around the world from Washington, DC.)

1. On 12 Feb 2017, North Korea launched a missile that flew 500 km. [New York Times](#); [CNN](#); [BBC](#).
2. On 6 March 2017, North Korea launched four SCUD missiles, each of which flew 1000 km. [Washington Post](#); [CNN](#).
3. On 22 March 2017, North Korea tested a missile that exploded within seconds of launch. [New York Times](#); [CNN](#).
4. On 5 April 2017, North Korea launched a solid-fuel Pukguksong-2 missile, which flew 60 km. [New York Times](#).
5. On 15 April 2017, North Korea tested a missile that exploded 4 seconds after launch. [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#).
6. On 29 April 2017, North Korea tested a missile that failed several minutes after launch. [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#).
7. On 14 May 2017, North Korea successfully tested the re-entry of an Hwasong-12 ICBM. [New York Times](#).
8. On 21 May 2017, North Korea tested a Pukguksong-2 missile that flew 500 km. [Yonhap](#); [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#).
9. On 29 May 2017, North Korea launched a SCUD missile that traveled 450 km. [Yonhap](#); [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#).
10. On 8 June 2017, North Korea tested several (four?) anti-ship cruise missiles, which traveled 200 km and landed in the Sea of Japan. [Yonhap](#); [Reuters](#); [CNN](#); [New York Times](#).
11. On 4 July 2017, North Korea launched one missile that flew 930 km and landed in the Sea of Japan. The missile was launched on a high trajectory, with a maximum altitude of 2800 km, so it would not fly over Japan. [Yonhap](#); [Reuters](#).

Later on 4 July, the North Korean government *boasted* it had successfully tested an Hwasong-14 ICBM that was capable of "reaching anywhere in the world". [Yonhap](#); [JoongAng](#); [New York Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [CNN](#). This boast seems intended to expose Trump's bluff about a preemptive military strike on North Korea. Despite the North Korean propaganda, this missile could reach Alaska, but *not* the west coast of the USA.

12. On 28 July 2017 at 23:41 South Korean time (14:41 GMT), North Korea launched an

ICBM that reached an altitude of 3,700 kilometers before plunging into the Sea of Japan. This missile could reach Los Angeles, Denver, or Chicago. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [JoongAng](#); [38North](#).

13. On 26 August 2017, North Korea fired three short-range missiles, two of which traveled 250 km into the Sea of Japan. The U.S. Military claimed the second missile exploded “almost immediately”. [Yonhap](#); [Associated Press](#)(blog); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).
14. On 29 August 2017, North Korea fired a Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile over Japan. The missile landed in the Pacific Ocean, 2700 km from its launch site. The South Korean military said the missile was launched from near the Pyongyang International Airport, perhaps from a mobile launcher. NHK said the missile "split into three pieces before splashing into the Pacific Ocean". [Yonhap](#); [NHK](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#).
15. Friday morning, 15 September, 06:57 South Korean time (21:57 GMT on 14 Sep), North Korea launched a Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missile that flew over Japan. As with the 29 Aug 2017 launch, the missile was launched from near the Pyongyang Airport. The missile flew for 3700 km before landing in the Pacific Ocean. [Yonhap](#)(launched from Pyongyang); [Yonhap](#); [NHK](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

16.

Firing *one* missile could be an engineering test, while firing multiple missiles in one day is likely to be a military training exercise.

During April 2017, the conventional wisdom was that North Korea would test another nuclear weapon, given preparations seen by reconnaissance satellites at the test site. But *no* nuclear test occurred. Does that mean that Trump's belligerent threats were successful? No, because the North Koreans tested three ballistic missiles during April 2017 and three more during May 2017, each time in defiance of United Nations Security Council Resolutions and in defiance of international demands. Before Trump's belligerent threats began in April, North Korea had a total of three missile tests during January, February, and March 2017.

Apparently, North Korea's response to Trump was to accelerate their missile tests from an average of one/month to three/month.

March 2017

On 16 March 2017, U.S. Secretary of State declared in Japan:

Well, I think it's important to recognize that the diplomatic and other efforts of the past 20 years to bring North Korea to a point of denuclearization have failed. So we have 20 years of failed approach, and that includes a period in which the United States provided \$1.35 billion in assistance to North Korea as an encouragement to take a different pathway. That encouragement has been met with further development of nuclear capabilities, more missile launches, including those of the recent February 11th

and March the 5th. In the face of this ever-escalating threat, it is clear that a different approach is required.

Rex Tillerson, "Press Availability With Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida," [U.S. State Dept](#), 16 March 2017.

On 17 March 2017, Trump tweeted:

North Korea is behaving very badly. They have been "playing" the United States for years. China has done little to help!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 09:07 EDT, 17 Mar 2017.

On 17 March 2017, U.S. Secretary of State declared in Korea:

We stand together in facing what was once a regional security challenge, but today North Korea threatens not only its regional neighbors, but the United States and other countries. Efforts toward North Korea to achieve peaceful stability over the last two decades have failed to make us safer. The U.S. and our allies have repeatedly reassured North Korea's leaders that we seek only peace, stability, and economic prosperity for Northeast Asia. As proof of our intent, America has provided \$1.3 billion in assistance to North Korea since 1995. In return, North Korea has detonated nuclear weapons, and dramatically increased its launches of ballistic missiles to threaten America and our allies.

The U.S. commitment to our allies is unwavering. In the face of North Korea's grave and escalating global threat, it is important for me to consult with our friends, and chart a path that secures the peace. Let me be very clear: the policy of strategic patience has ended. We are exploring a new range of diplomatic, security, and economic measures. All options are on the table. North Korea must understand that the only path to a secure, economically-prosperous future is to abandon its development of nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles, and other weapons of mass destruction.

....

.... It is important that the leadership of North Korea realize that their current pathway of nuclear weapons and escalating threats will not lead to their objective of security and economic development. That pathway can only be achieved by denuclearizing, giving up their weapons of mass destruction. And only then will we be prepared to engage with them in talks.

Rex Tillerson, "Remarks With Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se Before Their Meeting," [U.S. State Dept](#), 17 March 2017.

On 16 March, Tillerson said diplomacy with North Korea had "failed" and "a different approach is required." On 17 March, Tillerson said U.S. "patience has ended" — and he said the U.S. is considering "new ... security ... measures" and "All options are on the table." On these two days, Tillerson seems to be hinting at a possible pre-emptive military strike by the U.S. on North Korea.

Note that Tillerson demands that North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons program *before* the U.S. Government will engage in more negotiations with the North Korean aggressors. The leadership of North Korea is paranoid that the U.S. Military is preparing an invasion of

North Korea, and so the North Korean government strongly believes that it *needs* nuclear weapons to deter the U.S. It is unlikely that the North Koreans will voluntarily abandon their nuclear weapons program.

On 31 March 2017, the U.S. Secretary of Defense said North Korea's weapons development program has "got to be stopped". [Associated Press](#). In a 2 April 2017 interview with the [Financial Times](#), Trump said the U.S. Government would act unilaterally to solve the North Korean problem if China declined to help solve the problem: "Well if China is not going to solve North Korea, we will. That is all I am telling you." In an interview with *The Times* of London on 4 April, retired U.S. General Jack Keane said: "A pre-emptive strike against launch facilities, underground nuclear sites, artillery and rocket response forces and regime leadership targets may be the only option left on the table. We are rapidly and dangerously moving towards a military option." [The Australian](#).

On the early morning of 7 April 2017, the U.S. Navy suddenly launched a massive airstrike with Tomahawk cruise missiles against one of Syria's military airfields. On 13 April, the U.S. Air Force dropped a 20,000 pound bomb on caves in Afghanistan, perhaps entombing 100 Taliban members. That was the first combat use of the Massive Ordnance Air Blast (MOAB) bomb, the largest conventional explosive in the U.S. arsenal. Those two airstrikes showed the world — including North Korea — that U.S. president Trump was much more willing to use military force than president Obama.

The above paragraphs are background for what happens next.

U.S.S. Vinson and inconsistent U.S. policy on North Korea

9 April 2017: U.S.S. Vinson to Korea

On 9 April 2017, the U.S. Navy announced the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Carl Vinson and three other warships — each of the three carry Tomahawk cruise missiles — began sailing on 8 April to the ocean near North Korea. (All of the following news articles were published on 9 April, except as noted.) [U.S. Navy](#); [Reuters](#); [U.S. Pacific Command](#)(10Apr); [Pentagon](#)(10Apr); [Washington Post](#); [NY Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [JoongAng Ilbo](#)(Yonhap 10Apr); [The Guardian](#).

The obvious U.S. intention was to be ready to launch a pre-emptive military strike against North Korea, perhaps to decapitate the government in Pyongyang, destroy their nuclear weapons development program, and/or destroy their ballistic missile program.

9-12 April 2017: quotations from White House & Pentagon

On Sunday, 9 April, the U.S. Navy's Third Fleet issued a press release. On Monday 10 April, the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) posted an identical press release at its website, of which I quote the first two paragraphs:

Adm. Harry Harris, commander, U.S. Pacific Command, has directed the Carl Vinson Strike Group to sail north and report on station in the Western Pacific Ocean after departing Singapore April 8.

Carl Vinson Strike Group, including Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson (CVN 70), embarked Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 2, Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyers USS Wayne E. Meyer (DDG 108) and USS Michael Murphy (DDG 112), and Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain (CG 57), will operate in the Western Pacific rather than executing previously planned port visits to Australia. The Strike Group will remain under the operational control of U.S. 3rd Fleet as part of the 3rd Fleet Forward initiative.

"Carl Vinson Strike Group Departs Singapore for Western Pacific," [PACOM](#), 10 April 2017. Same press release posted at the [U.S. Navy](#) website on 9 April.

On 9 April 2017, Trump's National Security Adviser, General H.R. McMaster, tersely said on a television program:

CHRIS WALLACE, FOX NEWS ANCHOR: Why the carrier strike force to the Korean Peninsula?

McMASTER: Well, it's prudent to do it, isn't it? I mean, North Korea has been engaged in a pattern of provocative behavior. This is a rogue regime that is now a nuclear capable regime, and President Xi and President Trump agreed that that is unacceptable, that what must happen is the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. And so, the president has asked to be prepared to give him a full range of options to remove that threat the American people and to our allies and partners in the region.

"Exclusive: General H.R. McMaster on decision to strike Syria," [Fox News](#), 9 April 2017.

On 11 April 2017, Trump tweeted that the USA would solve the North Korean problem, either with or without the help of China.

North Korea is looking for trouble. If China decides to help, that would be great. If not, we will solve the problem without them! U.S.A.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 11 April 2017.

On 11 April, the White House press secretary said at a press briefing:

[About Trump's tweet] I just said that, as you know, when the President is ready to act, he makes it very clear. And I think there is no question that when the President is ready to make a statement, he will do that.

But I think he has made it clear with respect to North Korea that their behavior and their actions with respect to the missile launches is not tolerable. The last thing we want to see is a nuclear North Korea that threatens the coast of the United States, or, for that matter, any other country and any other set of human beings. So we need stability in that region, and I think he has put them clearly on notice.

....

QUESTION: And when you unpack it through that lens and the fact that the USS Carl Vinson is sort of steaming out toward the Sea of Japan, that may be an additional

pressure to maybe get China to come to the table. Putting that strike carrier group in the Sea of Japan, in that region, is that also a messaging circumstance? Or is that simply protective for our allies in Japan and Korea?

MR. SPICER: A carrier group is several things. The forward deployment is deterrence, presence. It's prudent. But it does a lot of things. It ensures our -- we have the strategic capabilities, and it gives the President options in the region.

But I think when you see a carrier group steaming into an area like that, the forward presence of that is clearly, through almost every instance, a huge deterrence. So I think it serves multiple capabilities.

"Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer, 4/11/2017, #36," [White House](#), begins 13:42 EDT, 11 April 2017.

On 11 April, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Jim Mattis, gave a press briefing.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, if I can ask you about North Korea, the Vinson strike group has now been redirected towards the Sea of Japan in the coming weeks. Has tension ratcheted up just recently in the past few days and can you explain why, what has changed just in the past couple of days or week?

SEC. MATTIS: As far as the movement of the Vinson, she's stationed there in the western Pacific for a reason. She operates freely up and down the Pacific, and she's just on her way up there because that's where we thought it was most prudent to have her at this time. There's not a specific demand signal or specific reason why we're sending her up there.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) unusual for us to know about a ship movement in advance. That was sort of what — what got everyone's attention. So why was that? I mean, why was it put out in advance? Was it just to signal to North Korea that there would be a show of presence there?

SEC. MATTIS: I believe it's because she was originally headed in one direction for an exercise, and we canceled our role in that exercise, and that's what became public. We had to explain why she wasn't in that exercise. [Sic: The ship's port visit to Fremantle, Australia, was cancelled; the exercise with the Royal Australian navy is proceeding as planned.]

"Press Conference by Secretary Mattis and Gen. Votel in the Pentagon Briefing Room," [Pentagon](#), 11 April 2017, retrieved 22 April 2017. [Material in brackets added by Pentagon *after* the press conference.]

In an interview by Maria Bartiromo of Fox Business Network, Trump tersely spoke about North Korea.

Although he didn't get into specifics, Trump spoke about his decision to send the USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier and its battle group to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

"We are sending an armada. Very powerful." Trump said. "We have submarines. Very powerful, far more powerful than the aircraft carrier, that I can tell you."

"Trump on North Korea: 'We Are Sending an Armada'," [Fox News](#), 07:27 EDT, 12 Apr

2017.

On 13 April 2017, Trump *again* tweeted that the USA would solve the North Korean problem, either with or without the help of China.

I have great confidence that China will properly deal with North Korea. If they are unable to do so, the U.S., with its allies, will! U.S.A.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 13 April 2017.

China is obviously an indispensable party to solving the North Korean problem. Trump's threat to ignore China is like poking China in the eye.

If the U.S. Military launched a pre-emptive strike on North Korea, then North Korea might respond with artillery fire on Seoul, the capital of South Korea. North Korea might even invade South Korea. Even if the U.S. does *not* launch an airstrike on North Korea, the U.S. saber-rattling increases tension with North Korea and might provoke North Korea to attempt a pre-emptive strike. [Hankyoreh](#)(11Apr); [Washington Post](#). On 12 April, the [Korea Herald](#) said: "North Korea's threat of impending nuclear and missile tests and the US escalation of saber-rattling in response have raised tensions around the Korean Peninsula."

17-18 April: U.S.S. Vinson actually went to Australia

But on 17-18 April 2017, it was revealed that the U.S.S. Carl Vinson and three other ships had sailed south from Singapore on 8 April to join the Australian Navy for previously scheduled exercises. On 8 April, the U.S.S. Carl Vinson did *not* sail north from Singapore, towards Korea. [Defense News](#)(17Apr); [Stars&Stripes](#); [NY Times](#); [NBC News](#); [Washington Post](#); [Los Angeles Times](#); [CNN](#)(19Apr); [Reuters](#)(19Apr); [Straits Times](#)(20Apr).

That could mean the U.S. Government engaged in a hoax, deception, or deliberate falsehood. As Trump has previously said in other contexts, this is FAKE NEWS! The U.S. Government lost credibility as a result of this hoax. Worse, the U.S. Government was recklessly gambling with peace and safety in South Korea.

The admission by the U.S. Government on 18 April can also be interpreted as neither the Pentagon nor the White House knew the location of the U.S.S. Carl Vinson for 9 days — which is colossal incompetence.

Note that on 9-10 April, the Navy and PACOM falsely said: "to sail north ... after departing Singapore April 8". But on 8 April, the U.S.S. Vinson actually sailed *south* from Singapore, toward Australia. Note the Navy and PACOM also falsely said: "... will operate in the Western Pacific rather than executing previously planned port visits to Australia." And that is not all. Concurrently with these Navy press releases, anonymous Navy officers were telling journalists about the intent of sending the U.S.S. Vinson group to North Korea. (See, e.g., [Reuters](#)(UK); [Reuters](#)(USA), which are cited in many news articles.)

Summarizing the above quotations, on 9-12 April, McMaster, Trump, Mattis, and Spicer all apparently believed the U.S.S. Carl Vinson was heading toward Korea. The fact that so many

high-level government officials had their facts wrong is really distressing. But when one considers the anonymous Navy officers who talked to journalists on 9 April about the intent of sending the U.S.S. Vinson to North Korea, there is a *possibility* that the 9 April statements were a deliberate hoax by the U.S. Government.

My search of the Pentagon news articles and news releases on 22 April 2017 shows the Pentagon did *not* correct their erroneous news article of 10 April. Further, my search of the PACOM news on 22 April shows PACOM did *not* correct their erroneous news article of 10 April. The failure to correct erroneous articles is consistent with a deliberate hoax.

I would expect that someone in either PACOM or the Pentagon would read a newspaper article about how the U.S.S. Vinson strike group was traveling towards Korea, when that someone knew the Vinson strike group was traveling towards Australia. That someone could have sent an e-mail to the Pentagon press office and aborted the spreading of false information. The fact that many knowledgeable Navy officers did *not* correct the false information again suggests to me the *possibility* that the 9 April statements were a deliberate hoax by the U.S. Government.

Finally, the cancellation of the U.S.S. Vinson's port visit in Australia is consistent with a deliberate hoax, in order to conceal the fact that the Vinson was near Australia.

Regardless of whether Trump engaged in deliberate hoax or colossal incompetence, the false claim that the U.S.S. Vinson was heading towards Korea on 8 April was criticized in South Korea. See, e.g., [New York Times](#); [JoongAng Ilbo](#); [Hankyoreh](#); [Hankyoreh](#)(editorial); [JoongAng Ilbo](#); [Chosun Ilbo](#).

On 18 April, *The New York Times* said: "With Mr. Trump himself playing up the show of force, Pentagon officials said, rolling back the story became difficult."

On 20 April 2017, the *Joong Ang* newspaper in South Korea explained:

The New York Times wrote Tuesday [18 April] that White House officials declined to comment on the confusion, referring questions to the Pentagon. Unnamed Pentagon officials reportedly characterized it as a miscommunication among U.S. authorities that later involved the media, saying it became difficult to correct the story once President Donald Trump began playing it up.

It is unclear whether Trump, a crusader against what he deems to be "fake news," purposefully ignored the truth in order to deter Pyongyang, which said the Vinson strike group was proof that the United States was planning an invasion.

Lee Sung-Eun, "Carl Vinson to arrive in Korea around April 25," [JoongAng Ilbo](#); 20 April 2017.

From the incidents chronicled in my essay at www.rbs0.com/trump.pdf, we know that Trump is *not* capable of admitting he made a factual error. It now appears that once Trump has publicly asserted a factual error, it is impossible to correct Trump. In this way, Trump's personality and management style prevents correction of his errors. And that could lead to Trump starting a major war that kills tens of thousands of U.S. Military personnel and wastes more than a trillion dollars of U.S. taxpayers' money.

19 April 2017
Stupid Excuses from White House

On 19 April, the president's press secretary said at a press conference:

QUESTION: And, Sean, on the USS Carl Vinson, what happened? Can you take us through the events from the perspective of the White House that led to the miscommunication — this administration thinking that this vessel was thousands of miles away from its actual location?

MR. SPICER: I'm sorry, can you repeat the last part?

QUESTION: Can you take us through the events that led people within this administration to believe the vessel was thousands of miles away from its actual location?

MR. SPICER: Well, I mean, PACOM put out a release talking about the group ultimately ending up in the Korean Peninsula. That's what it will do. I think we were asked very clearly about the use of a carrier group in terms of deterrence and foreign presence and what that meant, and we were — that's what we discussed. I'd refer you back to any other issues with that to the Department of Defense.

[QUESTION:] Does the President believe that he might have spoken too quickly on this location of the vessel before it was actually —

MR. SPICER: The President said that we have an armada going towards the peninsula. That's a fact; it happened — it is happening, rather.

QUESTION: Sean, I just want to follow up on that. Obviously, when the President of the United States says there is military hardware going to a region in the middle of a crisis on the Korean Peninsula, the allies of the United States are encouraged. When that happens to not be the case, they can interpret that as a false encouragement. So how is this White House explaining to South Korea and Japan that, in fact, during the buildup and the actual DPRK missile launch, there was no USS Carl Vinson off the coast of the Korean Peninsula?

MR. SPICER: Well, respectfully, Jessica, I would ask you to either touch base with PACOM or the Department of Defense. The statement that was put out was that the Carl Vinson Group was headed to the Korean Peninsula. It is headed to the Korean Peninsula. And it will arrive there —

QUESTION: It's headed there now, though.

MR. SPICER: What's that?

QUESTION: It's headed there now. It wasn't headed there last week.

MR. SPICER: Sure. No, no, no — but that's not what we ever said. We said that it was heading there, and it was heading there — it is heading there. So that remains —

QUESTION: — the impression that allies have —

MR. SPICER: But if there is an impression, then that's not — then there should have been clarification from people who were seeking it.

But, I mean, PACOM put out a release talking about what its ultimate destination was going to be, and that's where it ended up.

....

"Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer, 4/19/2017," [White House](#), begins 12:08 EDT, 19 April 2017.

Spicer is correct that PACOM put out an erroneous press release on 10 April. Spicer should have stopped there, and let PACOM take the blame. But then Spicer makes a specious and verbose argument that the White House correctly said the U.S.S. Vinson *will* arrive in Korea. There is a huge difference between the false version that the Vinson began heading from Singapore towards Korea on 8 April, and the true version the the Vinson finished the Australian exercises on 18 April and then began heading towards Korea. For example, some days are more important than others in North Korea: 15 April is the birthday of the Kim Il-sung, the founder of North Korea, and a day when many commentators expect weapons tests in North Korea. As another example, 25 April is the anniversary of the founding of the North Korean army, another day when many commentators expect weapons tests in North Korea.

North Korean threats & propaganda

On 10 April 2017, the Korean Central News Agency — the North Korean propaganda machine — responded to the announcement about the U.S.S. Vinson by saying “(North Korea) is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the US.” [The Guardian](#); [Joong Ang](#).

On 16 April 2017, North Korea released a propaganda video showing an imaginary attack by North Korean missiles on an unnamed U.S. city. [Washington Post](#).

On 23 April 2017, an editorial in the North Korean newspaper *Rodong Sinmun* says the North Koreans "revolutionary forces are combat-ready to sink a US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier [i.e., U.S.S. Vinson] with a single strike". [Reuters](#).

On 27 April 2017, North Korea released a propaganda video showing the White House in the crosshairs of a rifle sight, and also showed an aircraft carrier in flames following an imaginary attack by North Korea. [Washington Post](#); [The Independent](#).

I attempted to access the website of the Korean Central News Agency, hoping to quote the text from the original source, but the North Korean propaganda website was offline when I looked on several different days during April 2017. The KCNA is amusing with their extreme

propaganda that is written in stilted English that *no* fluent speaker of English would use.

Japanese Cooperation

On 12 April 2017 — when people believed the U.S.S. Vinson would soon arrive near Korea — Japan announced it would conduct military drills with the Vinson. [Reuters](#); [Japan Times](#)(Reuters); [Asahi Shimbun](#).

On 23 April 2017, the U.S.S. Vinson group was joined by two ships of the Japanese Navy for exercises east of the Philippines. [Reuters](#); [Japan Times](#); [Yomiuri Shimbun](#).

On 29 April 2017, the U.S.S. Vinson group sailed into the Sea of Japan (which South Korea calls the "East Sea"). [Mainichi](#); [NHK](#). The Vinson will presumably stay close to the Japanese coast, to avoid short-range missiles from North Korea, and to give ample warning of any North Korean aircraft that might approach the U.S. Navy ships.

On 1 May 2017, Japan sent its largest warship, the helicopter carrier Izumo, as a symbolic escort for a U.S. supply ship sailing to the Vinson group. [Asahi Shimbun](#); [Mainichi](#).

On 3 May 2017, Japan added the destroyer Sazanami to the escort mission. [Japan Times](#); [Mainichi](#).

Later on 3 May 2017, the two ships of the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force completed their mission of escorting one U.S. Navy supply ship. [Kyodo](#).

Skipping ahead to 1 June 2017, Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force began a final training exercise with the USS Vinson and USS Reagan strike groups. The exercises ended on 3 June. [Reuters](#); [Japan Times](#); [Asahi Shimbun](#).

On 14 June 2017, the USS Vinson arrived in Hawaii on its way to its home port of San Diego. [Honolulu Star-Advertiser](#); [KITV](#).

"Maximum Pressure" on North Korea Trump also wants diplomacy

Concurrent with belligerent threats of U.S. military action to prevent North Korea from developing nuclear weapons and to prevent North Korea from developing ICBMs to deliver those nuclear weapons, people in the White House told journalists that Trump would be pursuing diplomacy with North Korea, as well as increased economic sanctions on North Korea. Specifically, on 14 April the [Associated Press](#) cited anonymous government officials as declaring a policy of "maximum pressure and engagement". See, e.g., [NY Times](#)(10Apr); [Washington Post](#)(14Apr); [Reuters](#)(16Apr); [CNBC](#)(16Apr); [Associated Press](#)(19Apr); [Washington Post](#)(19Apr); [Los Angeles Times](#)(19Apr); [NY Times](#)(26Apr); [Associated Press](#)(27Apr).

I have three comments:

1. As Tillerson said on 16-17 March 2017 (quoted above), diplomacy has *failed* to stop the North Koreans from developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. The North Koreans have a long track record of violating past agreements, which makes negotiations only a temporary solution ("kicking the can down the road"). More diplomacy appears futile.
2. Past economic sanctions on North Korea have been ineffective, partly because China, Russia, and other rogue nations ignored the sanctions. But China has been enforcing sanctions on North Korea beginning in February 2017, so it is *possible* that sanctions *might* pressure North Korea into negotiating an end to their nuclear weapons program. It is also possible that more sanctions could make North Korea more isolated, more paranoid, and feeling more in need of a strong military. More sanctions appear futile.
3. The leadership of North Korea must be truly bewildered by U.S. policy towards North Korea. On 9 April and following days, it appeared that Trump might either launch Tomahawk cruise missile strikes on North Korea, or a pre-emptive bombing of North Korea's nuclear weapons development and test sites. Almost simultaneously, anonymous U.S. Government employees were quoted by journalists as saying Trump is bluffing with the military threats, and that Trump will pursue diplomacy. My comment is that this inconsistency by Trump's administration is not only dangerous, but also exposes Trump's administration as a bunch of amateurs who are *not* competent to deal with North Korea.

On 19 April 2017, Evan Horowitz wrote an editorial in the [Boston Globe](#) with a title: "There are no good options on North Korea. Zero."

On 26 April 2017, Trump hosted an extraordinary meeting for all 100 U.S. Senators at the White House, at which the Trump administration declared that defending the USA from nuclear attack by North Korea is now Trump's "top foreign-policy priority". See the [Joint Statement](#) by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats.

Immediately after the meeting at the White House, many of the Senators blabbed to journalists. See, e.g., [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#); [McClatchy](#). One wonders why the White House did not simply invite journalists to attend the briefing.

On 27 April, Trump was interviewed by Reuters, during which interview Trump admitted that a major war with North Korea was possible.

U.S. President Donald Trump said on Thursday [27 April] a major conflict with North Korea is possible in the standoff over its nuclear and missile programs, but he would prefer a diplomatic outcome to the dispute.

"There is a chance that we could end up having a major, major conflict with North Korea. Absolutely," Trump told Reuters in an Oval Office interview ahead of his 100th day in office on Saturday [29 April].

Nonetheless, Trump said he wanted to peacefully resolve a crisis that has bedeviled multiple U.S. presidents, a path that he and his administration are emphasizing by preparing a variety of new economic sanctions while not taking the military option off the table.

"We'd love to solve things diplomatically but it's very difficult," he said.

....

[Trump] also said he wants South Korea to pay the cost of the U.S. THAAD anti-missile defense system, which he estimated at \$1 billion, and intends to renegotiate or terminate a U.S. free trade pact with South Korea because of a deep trade deficit with Seoul. Asked when he would announce his intention to renegotiate the pact, Trump said: "Very soon. I'm announcing it now."

Stephen J. Adler, Steve Holland, & Jeff Mason, "Exclusive: Trump says 'major, major' conflict with North Korea possible, but seeks diplomacy," [Reuters](#), 03:10 EDT, 28 April 2017.

See also [NY Times](#).

More about South Korea paying for THAAD is in my separate essay at www.rbs0.com/trump.pdf

Incidentally, during the Reuters interview, Trump went off topic and talked about the 2016 election results. While this digression is *not* relevant to North Korea, it is relevant to why Trump may be unfit to be president, so I am including it here. Reuters reported:

More than five months after his victory and two days shy of the 100-day mark of his presidency, the election is still on Trump's mind. Midway through a discussion about Chinese President Xi Jinping, the president paused to hand out copies of what he said were the latest figures from the 2016 electoral map.

"Here, you can take that, that's the final map of the numbers," the Republican president said from his desk in the Oval Office, handing out maps of the United States with areas he won marked in red. "It's pretty good, right? The red is obviously us."

He had copies for each of the three Reuters reporters in the room.

Stephen J. Adler, Jeff Mason, & Steve Holland, "Exclusive: Trump says he thought being president would be easier than his old life," [Reuters](#), 13:02 EDT, 29 April 2017.

My comment is that this is more evidence of Trump's narcissistic character flaw. And now back to North Korea.

Unfortunately, war with North Korea is increasingly likely, because previous U.S. presidents — at least back to Bill Clinton — erroneously believed that they could negotiate with North Korea. North Korea has gotten stronger and stronger, despite all of the sanctions and rhetoric from the USA, South Korea, Japan, and the United Nations. As North Korea accumulates more nuclear weapons, and more missiles, the apparently inevitable war with North Korea

will become much worse for South Korea, the USA, and Japan.

On 29 April 2017, after a North Korean missile test, Trump [tweeted](#): “North Korea disrespected the wishes of China & its highly respected President when it launched, though unsuccessfully, a missile today. Bad!”

On 1 May 2017, North Korea reacted to Trump's belligerence, and reacted explicitly to Trump's new policy of "maximum pressure and engagement". The Associated Press reported: North Korea's Foreign Ministry says the country will speed up measures to bolster its nuclear program "at the maximum pace" in response to the new U.S. policy that calls for new sanctions and "maximum pressure and engagement."

A statement from the Foreign Ministry spokesman on Monday [1 May] that was circulated by North Korea's U.N. Mission says the government is ready to respond to any option taken by the United States.

"NKorea says it will speed up nuke program in response to US," [Associated Press](#), 2 May 2017.

[Reuters](#) reported on 1 May 2017:

"Now that the U.S. is kicking up the overall racket for sanctions and pressure against the DPRK, pursuant to its new DPRK policy called 'maximum pressure and engagement', the DPRK will speed up at the maximum pace the measure for bolstering its nuclear deterrence," a spokesman for North Korea's foreign ministry said in a statement carried by its official KCNA news agency.

North Korea's "measures for bolstering the nuclear force to the maximum will be taken in a consecutive and successive way at any moment and any place decided by its supreme leadership," the spokesman said.

A summary of North Korea's tests of missiles during 2017 is given [above](#), which shows more frequent missile tests during April/May 2017.

1 May 2017: Trump's offer to negotiate

On 1 May 2017, Trump told Bloomberg News:

U.S. President Donald Trump said he would meet with Kim Jong Un amid heightened tensions over North Korea's nuclear weapons program if the circumstances were right.

“If it would be appropriate for me to meet with him, I would absolutely, I would be honored to do it,” Trump said Monday [1 May] in an Oval Office interview with Bloomberg News. “If it's under the, again, under the right circumstances. But I would do that.”

Margaret Talev & Jennifer Jacobs, "Trump Says He'd Meet With Kim Jong Un Under Right Circumstances," [Bloomberg News](#); 1 May 2017.

Later on 1 May, Trump's press secretary was asked about Trump's offer of a meeting with

Kim.

QUESTION: On North Korea, today the President told Bloomberg he was open to meeting with Kim Jong-un if the conditions were right. How does the President define the right condition to have this meeting?

MR. SPICER: Well, there's a lot of things that go along with that, and that's the key thing. "Under the right circumstances" was, I believe, the phrase he used. And I think that is something in keeping with our — consistent with the policy expressed by Secretary Tillerson as well.

We've got to see their provocative behavior ratcheted down immediately. There's a lot of conditions that I think would have to happen with respect to its behavior and to show signs of good faith. Clearly, conditions are not there right now, but I think the President has made it clear, as Secretary Tillerson had the other day, that if the conditions, if the circumstances present themselves we'll be prepared to, but they're clearly not at this time.

....

QUESTION: Coming back to North Korea, the President didn't just say he would be open to meeting with Kim Jong-un under the right circumstances. He said he would be "honored" to meet with him. This is somebody who has starved his own people, somebody who has threatened to destroy the United States. Just last week he put out a video showing the Capitol getting destroyed by North Korea fighters. How could he be "honored" to meet with Kim Jong-un?

MR. SPICER: Well, the President understands the threat that North Korea poses, and he will do whatever is necessary under the right circumstances to protect our country from the threat that they pose, so —

QUESTION: How could that be an honor?

MR. SPICER: I guess because he's still a head of state. So it is sort of — there is a diplomatic piece to this. But the bottom line is the President is going to do what he has to do. Right now he's building a coalition in the region to isolate North Korea both economically and diplomatically to get the threat — to take that threat down. And so — but that is his number-one priority right now, is protecting this country and our people.

....

QUESTION: Sean, two questions. One on — just to clarify on North Korea, were those conditions that you laid out to the earlier question, are those the conditions that would have to be met before there was any meeting — i.e. that North Korea would have to agree to totally disarm its nuclear program, stop threatening their neighbors? Are those the conditions?

MR. SPICER: I think those are some of the conditions. There's going to be a whole

host of ones that we determine, that the State Department determines in consultation with the President that have to be met.

As I mentioned, we are so early into this process that I don't see this happening anytime soon. But I think that, as the President said, under the right circumstances. Those circumstances aren't present today, and there would have to be significant change for that to even be a possibility.

"Daily Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sean Spicer — *43," [White House](#), begins 13:55 EDT, 1 May 2017.

My comment is that Trump being "honored" to meet Kim the belligerent dictator does *not* sound like the Trump who ordered the U.S.S. Vinson to sail towards North Korea just three weeks earlier. Trump is being inconsistent. Furthermore, if Trump and Tillerson want negotiations, then they need to *clearly state all of the pre-conditions* that North Korea must satisfy before such negotiations are scheduled. Adding more conditions later would be likely to scuttle the negotiations that Trump allegedly desires.

On 29 May 2017, after a North Korean missile test, Trump [tweeted](#): "North Korea has shown great disrespect for their neighbor, China, by shooting off yet another ballistic missile...but China is trying hard!"

June-July 2017: North Korean Situation Worsens

The world needs China and the USA to work together to solve the North Korean problem. But on 20 June 2017, Trump publicly complained that China had failed to end the North Korean nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs:

While I greatly appreciate the efforts of President Xi & China to help with North Korea, it has not worked out. At least I know China tried!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 20 June 2017.

See also: [Washington Post](#) and [New York Times](#).

On 29 June 2017, the U.S. Government announced a US\$ 1.4 billion sale of weapons and munitions to Taiwan. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The communist Chinese government was outraged, because it regards Taiwan as a renegade province that is part of China.

[Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#). After the weapons sales to Taiwan, it will be even more difficult for China to cooperate with the USA in solving the North Korea problem. If the USA and South Korea — without the cooperation of China — launch a military strike on North Korea, there is a real risk that China would join with North Korea in a retaliation.

On 30 June 2017, Trump [tweeted](#): "The era of strategic patience with the North Korea regime has failed. That patience is over. We are working closely with...." He did not finish his tweet, but he probably intended to say the U.S. Government is working with the South Korean government.

On 29-30 June 2017, the new South Korean president met with Trump at the White House, and they issued a Joint Statement that said in part:

President Trump and President Moon pledged to continue to coordinate closely to achieve our shared goal of complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner. The two leaders called on the DPRK [North Korea] to refrain from provocative, destabilizing actions and rhetoric, and to make the strategic choice to fulfill its international obligations and commitments. The two leaders affirmed that the DPRK's nuclear tests and unprecedented number of ballistic missile tests constitute direct violations of multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) and highlight the accelerating threat the DPRK's missile programs pose to international peace and security. They affirmed their commitment to fully implement existing sanctions and impose new measures designed to apply maximum pressure on the DPRK and compel Pyongyang to cease its provocative actions and return to sincere and constructive talks. The two leaders also urged all UN member states to swiftly and fully implement UNSCR obligations and took note, with appreciation, of constructive actions by some countries around the world to exert diplomatic and economic pressure on the DPRK to return to credible negotiations on denuclearization.

"Joint Statement between the United States and the Republic of Korea," [White House](#), 30 June 2017.

Notice that this Joint Statement, which is official U.S. policy, clearly calls for negotiations with North Korea, and does *not* mention military action. But the goal is "complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" — meaning North Korea must give up its nuclear weapons, something that North Korea will *not* do.

On 26 June 2017, James Clapper — a former general in the U.S. Air Force and Obama's Director of National Intelligence from Aug 2010 to Jan 2017 — was in South Korea, where he made a speech that was reported on 3 July.

James Clapper, former U.S. director of national intelligence for the Barack Obama administration, said North Korean denuclearization is no longer achievable and that Washington should focus on capping its nuclear and missile capabilities.

Clapper also confirmed, when asked last week in Seoul by reporters from the Korea JoongAng Daily and the JoongAng Ilbo, that this means South Korea and the United States must acknowledge North Korea as a nuclear power.

Clapper, who retired in January after serving six and a half years in his post, said he could attest from first-hand experience in North Korea during his trip there in November 2014 that Pyongyang will not give up its nuclear arsenal.

“Would be nice if they did, would be great if we could figure out some incentive to motivate them to give up their nuclear weapons, but they’re not going to do that,” said Clapper. “That’s their ticket to survival. It’s how they create deterrence against attacks against them, which they are very afraid of, and it’s how they have leverage, how they have face.”

Clapper's assertion undermines U.S. President Donald Trump's North Korea policy,

which includes not recognizing North Korea as a nuclear state, imposing sanctions, not seeking regime change and resolving the problem with dialogue.

....

Clapper says the U.S. realistically has no pre-emptive military options and that attacking the North would be reckless. "That's not really plausible," he said, because "if we were to preemptively attack North Korea, they would automatically respond, and all that artillery and rocketry on the DMZ [demilitarized zone] would be unleashed on Seoul, and there would be great death and destruction if that was to happen."

Lee Sung-Eun, "Clapper: North Korea is now a nuclear power," [JoongAng](#), 3 July 2017.

The Truth is that North Korea has had nuclear weapons since its first test of an atomic bomb on 9 Oct 2006. The public declarations of U.S. Presidents George W. Bush, Obama, and now Trump that the U.S. Government will *never* accept North Korea's nuclear weapons were false. The U.S. Government has *no* choice — diplomacy and sanctions have failed, and it is *not* a viable option to have a preemptive military strike on North Korea's nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons manufacturing plant(s).

On the night of 2 July 2017 in Washington, DC, Trump called the premier of China. Trump again asked China to help end the threat of the North Korean nuclear weapons program. But China has been miffed by at least three recent provocative actions of the USA: U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, U.S. accusing the Chinese government of human rights violations, and sending a U.S. warship near an island in the South China Sea that is claimed as Chinese territory. [White House](#); [New York Times](#); [Washington Post](#). Again, Trump's government is following an inconsistent policy toward China, repeatedly offending China and then asking for China's help on North Korea.

On the night of 3 July 2017 in Washington, DC, North Korea successfully tested a long-range ballistic missile. Trump tweeted:

North Korea has just launched another missile. Does this guy have anything better to do with his life? Hard to believe that South Korea.....

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 22:19 EDT, 3 July 2017.

....and Japan will put up with this much longer. Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 22:24 EDT, 3 July 2017.

Japan has little choice — it must "put up" with North Korea because Japan has an anemic military. South Korea understands that the North Korean army has artillery aimed at Seoul, where more than ten million people live, so South Korea does *not* want war with North Korea. Finally, Trump's colloquial phrase "heavy move" may be difficult for the Chinese to understand.

On the night of 4 July 2017, the U.S. Secretary of State issued the following statement about North Korea's test of their first successful ICBM.

The United States strongly condemns North Korea's launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile. Testing an ICBM represents a new escalation of the threat to the

United States, our allies and partners, the region, and the world.

Global action is required to stop a global threat. Any country that hosts North Korean guest workers, provides any economic or military benefits, or fails to fully implement UN Security Council resolutions is aiding and abetting a dangerous regime. All nations should publicly demonstrate to North Korea that there are consequences to their pursuit of nuclear weapons. We intend to bring North Korea's provocative action before the UN Security Council and enact stronger measures to hold the DPRK accountable.

The United States seeks only the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the end of threatening actions by North Korea. As we, along with others, have made clear, we will never accept a nuclear-armed North Korea.

The President and his national security team are continuing to assess the situation in close coordination with our allies and partners.

Rex Tillerson, "Statement by Secretary Tillerson," [State Dept](#), 4 July 2017.

My comment is that the U.S. Government needs to stop saying "we will *never* accept a nuclear-armed North Korea". In negotiations, the best outcome that the U.S. can realistically hope to achieve is to have North Korea limit their nuclear weapons and ICBM programs. As I said above, the U.S. has been tolerating North Korea's nuclear weapons since 2006.

On 5 July 2017, the Associated Press reported that the North Korean premier, Kim Jong Un, declared that North Korea would never give up its nuclear weapons:

Kim also said North Korea "would neither put its nukes and ballistic rockets on the table of negotiations in any case nor flinch even an inch from the road of bolstering the nuclear force chosen by itself unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat to the DPRK are definitely terminated," the Korean Central News Agency reported.

Foster Klug And Hyung-Jin Kim, "Kim vows North Korea's nukes are not on negotiation table" [Associated Press](#), 5 July 2017.

On 5 July, Trump tweeted:

Trade between China and North Korea grew almost 40% in the first quarter. So much for China working with us — but we had to give it a try!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 07:21 EDT, 5 July 2017.

The approximate 40% figure appears correct. The [New York Times](#) reported: "China's trade with the North grew 37.4 percent during the first three months of the [2017] year, compared with the same period in 2016, Chinese trade data released in April showed." See also [Washington Post](#). My comment is that Trump should use trade data from the second quarter of 2017, because China banned imports of North Korean coal only on 18 Feb (midway through the first quarter), and because the Chinese premier met Trump face-to-face on 6-7 April (*after* the first quarter).

Quest for Sanctions on North Korea after 4 July ICBM test

On the afternoon of 5 July 2017, in a speech to the United Nations Security Council, U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley threatened military action against North Korea.

The United States does not seek conflict. In fact, we seek to avoid it. We seek only the peaceful denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and an end to the threatening actions by North Korea. Regrettably, we're witnessing just the opposite. Make no mistake, North Korea's launch of an ICBM is a clear and sharp military escalation. The North Korean regime openly states that its missiles are intended to deliver nuclear weapons to strike cities in the United States, South Korea, and Japan. And now it has a greater capacity to do so.

In truth, it is not only the United States and our allies that are threatened. North Korea's destabilizing escalation is a threat to all nations in the region and beyond. Their actions are quickly closing off the possibility of a diplomatic solution.

The United States is prepared to use the full range of our capabilities to defend ourselves and our allies. One of our capabilities lies with our considerable military forces. We will use them if we must, but we prefer not to have to go in that direction. We have other methods of addressing those who threaten us and of addressing those who supply the threats. We have great capabilities in the area of trade. President Trump has spoken repeatedly about this. I spoke with him at length about it this morning.

....

The international community has spoken frequently against the illegal and dangerous actions of the North Korean regime. For many years, there have been numerous UN sanctions against North Korea. But they have been insufficient to get them to change their destructive course. So in order to have an impact — in order to move North Korea off its military escalation — we must do more. We will not look exclusively at North Korea. We will look at any country that chooses to do business with this outlaw regime. We will not have patience for stalling or talking our way down to a watered-down resolution.

Nikki Haley, "Remarks at an Emergency UN Security Council Meeting on Nonproliferation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," [State Dept](#), 5 July 2017.

My comment is that Trump's policy bounces inconsistently between:

1. Ask China to stop the North Korean weapons programs.
2. Tell China if they will not stop the North Korean weapons program, then the USA (and our allies) will stop the North Koreans without the help of China. This policy denies that China is an indispensable party to solving the North Korean problem.
3. Irritate China with U.S. sale of weapons to Taiwan, U.S. accusing the Chinese government of human rights violations, and sending a U.S. warship near an island in the South China Sea that is claimed as Chinese territory. Then either ask for China's help — or criticize China for not helping — solve the North Korean problem.
4. Threaten preemptive military strike by the USA on North Korea.

5. Propose negotiations with North Korea to abandon their nuclear weapons and ICBMs.
6. International trade sanctions on North Korea.

But none of these six methods have stopped North Korea's long-range missile programs. The [Washington Post](#) notes: "Trump has never had a plan for dealing with North Korea".

On 25 July, Nikki Haley reported "progress" at the United Nations Security Council in formulating new sanctions on North Korea, but China and Russia are delaying agreement. Despite North Korea's public claim that they tested an ICBM on 4 July, Russia says it was only a medium-range missile that should *not* cause sanctions. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#). Before Nikki Haley could negotiate sanctions for the 4 July launch of an ICBM, the North Koreans launched a bigger ICBM on 28 July.

On 28 July 2017, the United Nations Secretary General promptly condemned the launch of a second ICBM by North Korea:

The Secretary-General condemns the launch of another ballistic missile of possible intercontinental range by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on 28 July.

This is again a manifest violation of Security Council resolutions. The DPRK leadership must comply fully with its international obligations and work together with the international community to resolve the outstanding issues on the Korean Peninsula.

The Secretary-General reiterates his call on the DPRK leadership to respond to the Republic of Korea's proposals to reopen communication channels, particularly military-to-military, to lower the risk of miscalculation or misunderstanding and reduce tensions.

Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesman for the Secretary-General, "Statement attributable to the Spokesman for the Secretary-General on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," [U.N.](#), 28 July 2017.

On 30 July, there was some discussion of whether to call an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to condemn the test of a second ICBM by North Korea on 28 July. U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, issued a terse statement saying such a meeting would be futile, because past resolutions have been violated by both North Korea and U.N. member states (e.g., China).

Following North Korea's second ICBM launch on Friday [28 July], many have asked whether the United States will seek an emergency Security Council session on Monday. Some have even misreported that we are seeking such a session. That is mistaken.

There is no point in having an emergency session if it produces nothing of consequence. North Korea is already subject to numerous Security Council resolutions that they violate with impunity and that are not complied with by all UN Member States. An additional Security Council resolution that does not significantly increase the international pressure on North Korea is of no value. In fact, it is worse than nothing,

because it sends the message to the North Korean dictator that the international community is unwilling to seriously challenge him. China must decide whether it is finally willing to take this vital step. The time for talk is over. The danger the North Korean regime poses to international peace is now clear to all.

Nikki Haley, "Statement by Ambassador Haley on North Korea," [State Dept](#), 30 July 2017. Haley's statement was reported by [Reuters](#).

Notice that the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations just declared that the United Nations is unable to solve the North Korean problem, and further discussion is "worse than nothing".

On Saturday afternoon, 5 August 2017, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved [Resolution 2371](#), which imposes sanctions on North Korea for two ICBM tests in July. The sanctions prohibit the export of coal, iron, lead, and seafood. *If* China and other nations obey the sanctions, then the sanctions are intended to reduce by 1/3 North Korea's export income of approximately US\$ 3 billion/year. [U.N.](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 6 August 2017, the Chinese foreign minister, Wang Yi, publicly urged North Korea to stop tests of missiles, stop tests of nuclear weapons, and return to negotiations. [Associated Press](#); [The Telegraph](#).

On 7 August 2017, the North Korean foreign minister predictably declared that North Korea would *never* ("under no circumstances") abandon either its nuclear weapons or its ballistic missiles. [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [Yonhap](#); [Reuters](#).

8-31 July 2017: Continuing North Korean Problem

On 8 July 2017, the [Associated Press](#) explained why all of the options (e.g., preemptive military strikes, persuading China to motivate North Korea, economic sanctions, diplomacy) are likely to be unacceptable or fail. But, as is obvious even to Trump, the North Korean problem *needs* a solution, and that problem may be the most important problem currently facing the U.S. Government.

On 8 July 2017, Trump met the Chinese premier, Xi Jinping, on the sidelines of the G-20 summit in Hamburg Germany. Trump again asked the premier to help solve the North Korea problem. [White House](#); [Xinhua](#); [CNN](#); [Reuters](#).

On 11 July, China publicly whined that it should not be held responsible for solving the North Korea problem. [Reuters](#). In my opinion, there are three good reasons why China should be responsible for helping to solve this problem: (1) China is the largest trading partner of North Korea, (2) China often protects North Korea in votes at the United Nations Security Council, and (3) China has ignored some past U.N. Resolutions that restricted trade with North Korea. Journalists report that China's main concern is *not* North Korea's nuclear weapons. Instead, China's main concern is that trade sanctions could destabilize the North Korean government, with a flood of millions of unwanted North Korean refugees into China. Secondly, China does *not* want a unified, capitalist Korea under control of the South

Koreans on the Chinese border.

On 13 July 2017, [Reuters](#) reported that China's trade with North Korea had increased by 10.5% during the first half of the 2017 year, compared with the first half of the 2016 year.

On 14 July 2017, [Reuters](#) reported that a nongovernmental organization suggests that North Korea "may have reprocessed more plutonium than previously thought" and "also indicate operation of centrifuges that could be used to increase North Korea's stock of enriched uranium". If true, this is another indication of Trump's incompetent handling of the North Korean problem.

On 17 July 2017, the South Korean president proposed talks between military officers of South and North Korea on 21 July at Panmunjom in the DMZ. [Reuters](#); [Associated Press](#); [New York Times](#); [Washington Post](#). On 27 July, there was still *no* reply from the North Korean aggressors about the invitation to talk. [Hankyoreh](#). On the night of 28 July, North Korea successfully tested a second ICBM, which the [Associated Press](#) said "dimmed" the possibility of talks. On 2 August, the [Chosun Ilbo](#) reported that the North Koreans had *not* yet replied to the South Korean offer of 17 July. And on 5 September 2017, South Korea [said](#) the offer of talks was still valid, despite North Korea's tests of ballistic missiles and an alleged hydrogen-bomb.

On 25 July 2017, the [Washington Post](#) reported "a new assessment by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency [concluded] North Korea will be able to field a reliable, nuclear-capable intercontinental ballistic missile as early as next year". The previous estimate was that the North Koreans would be ready in 2020, but now they will be ready in 2018. As mentioned above, on 26 April 2017 the Trump administration declared the North Korean problem to be the U.S. Government's "top foreign-policy priority". But during June/July 2017, the Trump administration seems to have forgotten about its top-priority. Meanwhile, Secretary of State Tillerson on 25 July took a few days vacation amongst speculation that he is unhappy. [CNN](#). In April 2017, Trump *talked* about applying "maximum pressure" to North Korea, but the reality is that the North Koreans are applying pressure to the ineffective U.S. Government, to force the U.S. to appease the North Koreans.

On 27 July 2017, General Milley, the commander of the U.S. Army, gave a speech in which he said "time is running out" for non-military solutions (e.g., diplomatic or economic sanctions). General Milley said: "A war on the Korean Peninsula would be terrible. However, a nuclear weapon detonating in Los Angeles would be terrible. The fact of the matter is we are at a point in time where choices are going to have to be made one way or the other." [NHK](#)(Japan); [Stars&Stripes](#); [Reuters](#); [The Hill](#).

On 28 July 2017, when journalists were reporting a second successful test of an ICBM by North Korea, Trump was on Long Island, NY giving a speech in which he spoke about the need to arrest and deport MS-13 gang members from the USA to El Salvador. [White House](#); [Washington Post](#); [CBS NYC](#). The MS-13 gang is bad, but North Korea has nuclear weapons and ICBMs, which makes North Korea a much worse problem than MS-13.

During May, June, and July 2017, Trump seems to have mostly ignored the North Korean problem, despite Trump's many promises to solve the North Korean problem.

On the night of 29 July — more than 32 hours after the launch of a bigger ICBM by North Korea — Trump finally reacted.

I am very disappointed in China. Our foolish past leaders have allowed them to make hundreds of billions of dollars a year in trade, yet...

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 19:29 EDT, 29 July 2017.

...they do NOTHING for us with North Korea, just talk. We will no longer allow this to continue. China could easily solve this problem!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 19:35 EDT, 29 July 2017.

Just because China sells products to the USA (including some of Ivanka Trump's line of clothing), does *not* mean that China is obligated to solve the North Korean problem. "Just talk" is also what Trump does: more speeches, more tweets, more promises, but *no* results. Notice that Trump has *no* plan to solve the North Korean problem. Blaming "our foolish past leaders" and blaming China are *not* solutions to the North Korean problem.

On 31 July 2017, Trump made some public remarks in a cabinet meeting.

We have some interesting situations that we'll handle: North Korea, Middle East, lots of problems that we inherited from previous administrations. But we'll take care of them. We'll take care of them very well.

....

QUESTION: Mr. President, what can you do about North Korea?

THE PRESIDENT: We'll handle North Korea. We're going to be able to handle them. It will be handled. We handle everything. Thank you very much.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump in Cabinet Meeting," [White House](#), 10:07 EDT, 31 July 2017.

Trump's facile promise to "handle" North Korea is contradicted by Trump's failure during the past seven months.

On 31 July 2017, several technical problems were revealed that North Korea has *not* yet solved:

1. Analysis of Japanese video of the reentry of the 28 July ICBM test "suggests it failed to survive the extreme heat and pressure after re-entering the Earth's atmosphere". [Associated Press](#). See also [38North](#).
2. We do *not* know if North Korea has an accurate guidance system for its ICBM.
3. We do *not* know the mass of the dummy warhead used in the 28 July test. The heavier the warhead, the shorter the range of the missile. Also, we do *not* know if North Korea has miniaturized a nuclear weapon so it can be carried by their ICBM.

For purposes of prioritizing problem solving, I suggest we ignore these technical problems

and assume that North Korea can explode a nuclear weapon in Seattle, San Francisco, etc. in February 2018. That means Trump has six months remaining in which to solve the North Korea problem.

August 2017: Continuing North Korean Problem

On the morning of 1 August, U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham appeared on the NBC Today program and relayed that Trump had said the U.S. was willing to go to war with North Korea.

There will be war between the United States and North Korea over the rogue nation's missile program if it continues to aim intercontinental ballistic missiles at America, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said President Donald Trump has told him.

"He has told me that. I believe him," the lawmaker said Tuesday 1 Aug] on TODAY. "If I were China, I would believe him, too, and do something about it."

Graham said that Trump won't allow the regime of Kim Jong Un to have an ICBM with a nuclear weapon capability to "hit America."

"If there's going to be a war to stop [Kim Jong Un], it will be over there. If thousands die, they're going to die over there. They're not going to die here. And He has told me that to my face," Graham said.

....

[Graham said:] "[Trump is] having to make a choice that no president wants to make. They kicked the can down the road for 20 years, there's no place else to kick it."

Erik Ortiz & Arata Yamamoto, "Sen. Lindsey Graham: Trump Says War With North Korea an Option," [NBC News](#), 09:03 EDT, 1 Aug 2017; updated 05:54 EDT, 2 Aug 2017.

This news article was the top story at [Yonhap](#) and [JoongAng](#) in South Korea, as their nation would be devastated to protect the USA from North Korean warheads. Graham is wrong about "thousands die". A better estimate is millions, maybe tens of millions, dead.

On 1 August 2017, Secretary of State Tillerson appeared at the daily press briefing at the State Department and invited North Korea to negotiate with the USA.

One of the first threats we were confronted with upon entering office is North Korea, and it was the first policy area that we felt an urgency to deal with. And I think, as many of you have watched over the last several months, that threat has materialized in the ways that we expected it would. And that's why early on we identified it as a very urgent matter, and the North Koreans have certainly proven the urgency of that to us.

We initiated a sustained and continued intensified campaign on what I like to call peaceful pressure, because the options available to us, I think as all of you well

understand, are limited, and particularly if we think we are operating under a short period of time. So we felt the appropriate thing to do first was to seek peaceful pressure on the regime in North Korea to have them develop a willingness to sit and talk with us and others but with an understanding that a condition of those talks is there is no future where North Korea holds nuclear weapons or the ability to deliver those nuclear weapons to anyone in the region much less to the homeland.

In doing so, we've sought to partner with China. China does account for 90 percent of economic activity with North Korea. The Chinese have been very clear with us that we share the same objective, a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. They do not see it in their interest for North Korea to have nuclear weapons, just as we do not see it in anyone's interest. China has ways that they can put pressure on and influence the North Korean regime because of this significant economic relationship that no one else has.

We've been very clear with the Chinese we certainly don't blame the Chinese for the situation in North Korea. Only the North Koreans are to blame for this situation. But 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.

And that's why we continue to call upon them to use that influence with North Korea to create the conditions where we can have a productive dialogue. We don't think having a dialogue where the North Koreans come to the table assuming they're going to maintain their nuclear weapons is productive. So that's really what the objective that we are about is.

We have reaffirmed our position towards North Korea, that what we are doing, 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. And we're trying to convey to the North Koreans we are not your enemy, we are not your threat, but you are presenting an unacceptable threat to us, and we have to respond. And we hope that at some point, they will begin to understand that and that we would like to sit and have a dialogue with them about the future that will give them the security they seek and the future economic prosperity for North Korea, but that will then promote economic prosperity throughout Northeast Asia.

This is going to be a continued effort to put ever greater pressure on the North Korean regime because our other options, obviously, are not particularly attractive.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Remarks at a Press Availability," [U.S. State Dept](#), 1 Aug 2017.

Tillerson said "a condition of those talks is there is no future where North Korea holds nuclear weapons or the ability to deliver those nuclear weapons to anyone in the region much less to the homeland." Abandoning their nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles is *not* acceptable to North Korea. If Tillerson really wants to negotiate with the North Koreans, Tillerson needs to get rid of pre-conditions that will be nonstarters for North Korea. The USA must now accept North Korean nuclear weapons and missiles as a *fait accompli*.

When Tillerson told the North Koreans "we are not your enemy", he needs to back up those

words with an end to joint U.S.-South Korean military drills and perhaps also end other aggressive displays of U.S. military force.

It is unfortunate — and an indication of an amateurish, unplanned White House — that Trump's belligerent threats appeared hours before Tillerson proposed negotiations with North Korea. Trump's threat of war undercut Tillerson's proposed negotiations, and Tillerson's statement that "our other options, obviously, are not particularly attractive" hints that Trump is bluffing about war.

On 5 August 2017, General McMaster, Trump's National Security adviser, told MSNBC that Trump was considering a "preventive war" against North Korea. [Newsweek](#); [Fox News](#).

On 7 August 2017, U.S. Secretary of State Tillerson gave a press conference at which he again disclosed the U.S. pre-conditions for negotiating with the North Koreans.

Question [by Josh]: On North Korea, I'm wondering if you can discuss more specifically what the exact preconditions are for the U.S. to engage in the type of talks that you said we'd ultimately would like to have with them.

Tillerson: Well, the best signal that North Korea could give us that they're prepared to talk would be to stop these missile launches. We've not had an extended period of time where they have not taken some type of provocative action by launching ballistic missiles. So I think that would be the first and strongest signal they could send us is just stop, stop these missile launches. Obviously, we have other means of communication open to them, to certainly hear from them if they have a desire to want to talk.

....

Question: Secretary, you said earlier to Josh that preconditions for North Korea would be stopping missile launches. So how long do they need to stop those missile launches for in order to have conversations?

Tillerson: With respect to the North Korean missile launches, we'll know it when we see it. We're not going to give someone a specific number of days or weeks. This is really about the spirit of these talks, and they can demonstrate they're ready to sit with a spirit of finding a way forward in these talks by no longer conducting these missile tests. So this is not a give me 30 days and we're ready to talk. It's not quite that simple. So it is all about how we see their attitude towards approaching a dialogue with us.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Press Availability in Manila, Philippines," [U.S. State Dept](#), 7 Aug 2017.

Note that the North Koreans refuse to meet for negotiations until after the U.S. Government abandons its "hostile policy" toward North Korea (e.g., abandons military drills with South Korea, etc.). [Korea Herald](#). Tillerson refuses to meet for negotiations until after the North Koreans have suspended all tests of ballistic missiles (and also continue to suspend tests of nuclear weapons?). Both North Korea and the USA are intransigent about *not* satisfying these pre-conditions for negotiations, so there will be *no* negotiations in the foreseeable future. *If* Trump and Tillerson want diplomacy to prevent North Korea from acquiring ICBMs that can deliver nuclear warheads to the continental USA, then negotiations must

begin soon, without waiting months to verify whether North Korea has suspended tests of ballistic missiles. Because of the failures of Obama and Trump, we no longer have the luxury of time — we need a solution *now*.

On the afternoon of 8 August 2017, the [Washington Post](#) published the conclusion of a classified report by the Defense Intelligence Agency that North Korea now has a miniaturized nuclear warhead that will fit on their ballistic missiles.

The report that North Korea could deliver a nuclear weapon with its ICBMs apparently made Trump angry, and he responded with an impulsive, belligerent outburst:

North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen. He has been very threatening beyond a normal state. And as I said, they will be met with fire, fury, and, frankly, power, the likes of which this world has never seen before.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump Before a Briefing on the Opioid Crisis," [White House](#), 15:17 EDT, 8 August 2017.

Then on 8 August, the North Korean Army announced it was preparing a plan to test a group of four missiles, which are intended to land in the ocean, about 35 km from the U.S. Military base at Guam. The details of the test were announced on 10 August. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Washington Post](#); [CNN](#)(10Aug); [Voice of America](#)(10Aug); [Reuters](#)(10Aug); [Associated Press](#)(10Aug).

I believe the North Korean threat against Guam is a bluff. Over the past several years, North Korea has repeatedly threatened to destroy South Korea and/or the USA, but North Korea never made their threats into reality. It would be very reckless for North Korea to fire missiles with an unproven accuracy to hit just 35 km from U.S. territory, and the North Koreans have not been reckless in their past actions.

The [New York Times](#) criticized Trump's "harsh language" on 8 August. [The Guardian](#) in England commented that "The US president's 'fire and fury' rhetoric echoed the language of North Korean propaganda, and served as the reminder that on both sides of the lines in the confrontation, there are now volatile and brittle leaders, each insecure in their position and anxious to bolster their strongman image." [The Telegraph](#) in England remarked: "Donald Trump promises 'fire and fury' but the truth is he doesn't know what to do about North Korea." On 9 August, the [New York Times](#) reported that Trump improvised "fire and fury", without any review by his advisers. Also on 9 August, the [Washington Post](#) reported that U.S. government officials are privately talking about "an undisciplined presidential eruption threatening nuclear conflict".

My comment is that Trump has descended into a childish, amateurish escalation of rhetoric with North Korea. The North Koreans are experienced masters of propaganda and insults, and Trump is way out of his league in trying to compete with North Korean rhetoric. Moreover, Trump's belligerent rhetoric is recklessly endangering peace in Korea and likely postponing negotiation with the North Koreans. Furthermore, Trump's belligerent rhetoric will make it more difficult for Trump to build an international consensus (including China!) against North Korea.

What Trump said on 8 August was quite clear. But, on 9 August, Tillerson attempted to interpret it for the North Koreans:

And so I think in response to that, North Korea's rhetoric has just ratcheted up louder and louder and more threatening. So I think the President — what the President is doing is sending a strong message to North Korea in language that Kim Jong-un can understand, because [Kim] doesn't seem to understand diplomatic language. I think the President just wanted to be clear to the North Korean regime on the U.S. unquestionable ability to defend itself, will defend itself and its allies, and I think it was important that he deliver that message to avoid any miscalculation on their part.

....

QUESTION: Do you have any immediate diplomatic plans to de-escalate the situation that could have an impact within days instead of months or years?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, we have a very active, ongoing diplomatic effort, most of which is behind the scenes because that's where diplomacy is most effective. We had very open conversations and our telephone lines remain open, certainly, to China and Russia as well as our allies, and I think publicly, we've been pretty clear in our statements directed at the North Koreans as to what we would like to see happen and make clear to them that we do not seek to be a threat to them, but we have to respond to the serious threats that they make towards us.

....

I think the strategy we're currently on is working. In fact, again, we have now garnered widespread international support, obviously, not just with the UN Security Council resolution, but globally, countries are speaking out and expressing the same view as to what North Korea should do, which is not be a threat to the stability of the region.

I think, in fact, the pressure is starting to show. I think that's why the rhetoric coming out of Pyongyang is beginning to become louder and more threatening. Whether we've got them backed into a corner or not is difficult to say, but diplomatically, you never like to have someone in a corner without a way for them to get out.

QUESTION: And what is Pyongyang's way out?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Talks. Talks with the right expectation of what those talks will be about.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Secretary of State Rex Tillerson With Press [en route Guam]," [U.S. State Dept](#), 9 Aug 2017.

Tillerson said "we have to respond to the serious threats that they make towards us." Tillerson is wrong. It would have been preferable if Trump had simply ignored the belligerent rhetoric from North Korea. North Korea spews belligerent rhetoric like a cheap firework and should not be taken seriously.

Later on 9 August, the U.S. Secretary of Defense released a statement that said:

The United States and our allies have the demonstrated capabilities and unquestionable commitment to defend ourselves from an attack. Kim Jong Un should take heed of the United Nations Security Council's unified voice, and statements from governments the world over, who agree the DPRK poses a threat to global security and stability. The DPRK must choose to stop isolating itself and stand down its pursuit of nuclear weapons. The DPRK should cease any consideration of actions that would lead to the end of its regime and the destruction of its people.

President Trump was informed of the growing threat last December and on taking office his first orders to me emphasized the readiness of our ballistic missile defense and nuclear deterrent forces. 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. The DPRK regime's actions will continue to be grossly overmatched by ours and would lose any arms race or conflict it initiates.

Jim Mattis, "Statement by Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis," [Dept of Defense](#), 9 Aug 2017.

As an example of quality belligerent threats, consider the North Korean propaganda on 8 Aug 2017:

Timed to coincide with the fabrication of the heinous "sanctions resolution" against the DPRK at the UN, the U.S. war-thirsty forces are engrossed in war hysteria without discretion.

....

All these military actions being conducted in the ground, sea and air clearly go to prove that the nuclear war hysteria of the U.S. authorities including Trump has reached an extremely reckless and rash phase for an actual war after crossing the red line.

Under the prevailing grave situation, the General Staff of the KPA clarifies at home and abroad its resolute stand as follows to mercilessly smash all sorts of military provocation, being planned by the U.S. imperialist warmongers, with the inexhaustible military might of the powerful revolutionary Paektusan army which has so far been built.

1. The KPA [Korean People's Army] will start the Korean-style preemptive retaliatory operation of justice to wipe out the group of despicable plot-breeders once a slight sign of the U.S. provocation scheming to dare carry out a "beheading operation" against the supreme headquarters of the Korean revolution out of wild calculation is detected.

....

2. The provocative "preventive war" the U.S. has devised and plans to execute will be countered with a just all-out war of wiping out all the strongholds of the enemies including the U.S. mainland.

....

3. The attempt at "preemptive attack" oft-repeated by the U.S. military warmongers will be mercilessly foiled by the Korean style preemptive attack which will be mounted earlier. Preemptive strike is no longer the monopoly of the U.S.

....

4. The U.S. "secret operation" targeting the creation of disorder inside the DPRK and a regime change in it will be foiled by its all-people resistance.

....

The DPRK is an invincible ideological power in which all the service personnel and people are united around their leader in single mind and a country of an impregnable fortress in which all the people are armed and the whole country has been fortified.

....

Should the U.S. finally opt for a reckless military adventure, defying the stern warning of our revolutionary armed forces, the tragic end of the American empire will be hastened.

Korean Central News Agency, "U.S. War Hysteria Will Only Bring Miserable End Of American Empire: Spokesman For KPA General Staff," [KCNAwatch](#), 9 Aug 2017.

After the 5 August United Nations Security Council unanimous vote for sanctions on North Korea, it appeared that China might finally be part of a consensus to force North Korea to negotiate. But then on 8 August, Trump had his belligerent outburst about "fire and fury". The Chinese government responded to Trump by urging Trump to stop threatening North Korea. [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).

On 4 July 2017, China and Russia repeated their proposal of negotiations that are described [above](#). Both the North Koreans and the U.S. have ignored the reasonable Chinese-Russian proposal. Instead, the U.S. Government arrogantly issued ultimatums to the North Koreans, without regard to two powerful neighbors of North Korea (i.e., China and Russia). There are two ultimatums: the first was the declaration by U.S. presidents George W. Bush, Obama, and Trump that North Korea will *never* be allowed to have nuclear weapons — despite the U.S. toleration of North Korean nuclear weapons since 2006. The second ultimatum is by Trump: the North Koreans will *never* be allowed to have ICBMs that could deliver a warhead to the USA. As the North Koreans defy the U.S. ultimatums (and humiliate Trump), Trump has become increasingly belligerent.

Worse, the U.S. is scheduled to begin military exercises in South Korea on 21 August 2017, which will further provoke tensions with North Korea.

On 10 August 2017, Trump had another impulsive, belligerent outburst. The White House did *not* post a transcript of Trump's outburst, but fortunately *The Washington Post* did post a

transcript:

QUESTION: Mr. President, the North Koreans said yesterday that your statement on Tuesday [8 Aug] was “nonsense” — that’s the word that they used. Do you have any response to that?

TRUMP: Well, I don’t think they mean that, and I think they — it’s the first time they’ve heard it like they heard it. And, frankly, the people that were questioning that statement, “Was it too tough?” — maybe it wasn’t tough enough. They’ve been doing this to our country for a long time — for many years. And it’s about time that somebody stuck up for the people of this country and for the people of other countries.

So, if anything, maybe that statement wasn’t tough enough, and we’re backed 100 percent by our military. We’re backed by everybody, and we’re backed by many other leaders. And I noticed that many senators and others today came out very much in favor of what I said. But, if anything, that statement may not be tough enough.

QUESTION: What would be tougher than “fire and fury”?

TRUMP: Well, you’ll see. You’ll see.

....

So we will do, I think — the people of our country are safe, our allies our safe. And I will tell you this: North Korea better get their act together or they’re going to be in trouble like few nations ever have been in trouble in this world. Okay?

Donald J. Trump, "Trump’s tough-on-North Korea, toned-down-on-Russia Q&A session, annotated," [Washington Post](#), posted at 09:35 EDT, 11 August 2017.

See also news articles at: [Washington Post](#) and [New York Times](#).

On Friday morning, 11 August 2017, Trump tweeted:

Military solutions are now fully in place,locked and loaded,should North Korea act unwisely. Hopefully Kim Jong Un will find another path!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 07:29 EDT, 11 Aug 2017.

The [Washington Post](#) tells us that the phrase "locked and loaded" was used in the year 1949 in a movie that starred John Wayne.

On 11 August 2017, the [Associated Press](#) reported that the U.S. and North Korean governments have been secretly communicating for the past "several months".

On Friday afternoon, 11 August 2017, Trump made some remarks to journalists:

QUESTION: Any progress on the diplomatic backchannel?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we don't want to talk about progress, we don't want to talk about backchannels. We want to talk about a country that has misbehaved for many, many years — decades, actually — through numerous administrations. And they didn't want to take on the issue, and I have no choice but to take it on, and I'm taking it on. And we'll either be very, very successful quickly or we're going to be very, very successful in a different way, quickly.

....

QUESTION: Mr. President, you've said you want to send a strong message to North Korea. What do you say to your critics who say that your rhetoric is actually raising the tension?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, you know, my critics are only saying that because it's me. If somebody else uttered the exact same words that I uttered, they'd say, "What a great statement, what a wonderful statement." They're only doing it — but I will tell you, we have tens of millions of people in this country that are so happy with what I'm saying — because they're saying, finally we have a President that's sticking up for our nation and, frankly, sticking up for our friends and our allies.

And this man will not get away with what he's doing, believe me. And if he utters one threat, in the form of an overt threat — which, by the way, he has been uttering for years, and his family has been uttering for years — or if he does anything with respect to Guam, or anyplace else that's an American territory or an American ally, he will truly regret it and he will regret it fast.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump Before Workforce/Apprenticeship Discussion," [White House](#), 15:38 EDT, 11 August 2017.

On 12 August 2017, Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping had a telephone conversation, in which Xi told Trump to stop using inflammatory language about North Korea. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 13 August 2017, Trump's national security adviser, General H.R. McMaster, calmed the situation:

"We're not closer to war than a week ago but we are closer to war than we were a decade ago," McMaster said, adding that the Trump administration is prepared to deal militarily with North Korea if necessary.

But [McMaster] stressed that the U.S. is pursuing "a very determined diplomatic effort" led by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that's coupled with new financial sanctions to dissuade North Korean leader Kim Jong Un from further provocations.

Richard Lardner, "U.S. Officials Says Confrontation With NKorea Not Imminent," [Associated Press](#), 14:44 EDT, 13 Aug 2017.

Also see, Carol Morello, "Officials downplay idea that nuclear war with North Korea is imminent," [Washington Post](#), 19:24 EDT, 13 Aug 2017.

North Korea made a sudden and unexpected leap in ICBM technology in July 2017. On 14 August 2017, the [New York Times](#) cited a [report](#) that suggested North Korea purchased missile engines from a factory in the Ukraine, or from warehouses in Russia. Such a purchase would be another failure of United Nations sanctions on North Korea.

On 15 August 2017, Kim deferred his decision on whether to launch four missiles toward Guam. [The Guardian](#) reported: "But in a sign that Kim may be attempting to lower the diplomatic temperature, KCNA said he would continue to watch the 'foolish and stupid

conduct of the Yankees' before deciding whether to give an order for the launch." The [Associated Press](#) reported: "Kim praised the military for drawing up a 'close and careful plan' and said he would watch the 'foolish and stupid conduct of the Yankees' a little more before deciding whether to order the missile test, Kim's comments, however, with their conditional tone, seemed to hold out the possibility that friction could ease if the United States made some sort of gesture that Pyongyang considered a move to back away from previous 'extremely dangerous reckless actions.'" See also: [Reuters](#); [New York Times](#); [Yonhap](#).

On 15 August, China urged the USA and North Korea to "hit the brakes" on threats. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The Chinese foreign minister made the remarks in a telephone call to the Russian foreign minister. Later, the Chinese foreign ministry publicly disclosed the conversation.

Stephen Bannon, Trump's chief strategist, gave an interview on 15 August to *The American Prospect* magazine that was published on 16 August.

Bannon said he might consider a deal in which China got North Korea to freeze its nuclear buildup with verifiable inspections and the United States removed its troops from the peninsula, but such a deal seemed remote. Given that China is not likely to do much more on North Korea, and that the logic of mutually assured destruction was its own source of restraint, Bannon saw no reason not to proceed with tough trade sanctions against China.

Contrary to Trump's threat of fire and fury, Bannon said: "There's no military solution [to North Korea's nuclear threats], forget it. Until somebody solves the part of the equation that shows me that ten 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." Bannon went on to describe his battle inside the administration to take a harder line on China trade, and not to fall into a trap of wishful thinking in which complaints against China's trade practices now had to take a backseat to the hope that China, as honest broker, would help restrain Kim.

Robert Kuttner, "Steve Bannon, Unrepentant," [American Prospect](#), 16 August 2017.

Incidentally, Bannon's final day in the White House was Friday, 18 August. Bannon immediately returned to his previous position as executive chairman at the Breitbart news website. [Associated Press](#). While I agree with Bannon about Seoul and "no military solution", Bannon was wrong to undercut Trump and the U.S. Government, thereby exposing Trump's bluff about a military attack.

On 17 August, Tillerson and Mattis again said the U.S. was considering "military options" for North Korea. [Associated Press](#).

On 21 August 2017, [Reuters](#) disclosed a confidential OPCW report that says twice in the past six months North Korea has been caught sending chemical weapons to Syria. This is a very serious violation of United Nations Resolutions.

On 21 August, the U.S. Navy demonstrated their incompetence for the fourth time since Trump became president. See [below](#).

On 22 August 2017, the U.S. Secretary of State made some rather patronizing comments about North Korea:

And before taking your questions [on Afghanistan], I do want to make one comment on North Korea. I think it is worth noting that we have had no missile launches or provocative acts on the part of North Korea since the unanimous adoption of the UN Security Council resolution. And I want to take note of that; I want to acknowledge it. I am pleased to see that the regime in Pyongyang has certainly demonstrated some level of restraint that we've not seen in the past. We hope that this is the beginning of this signal that we've been looking for that they are ready to restrain their level of tensions, they're ready to restrain their provocative acts, and that perhaps we are seeing our pathway to sometime in the near future having some dialogue. We need to see more on their part, but I want to acknowledge the steps they've taken thus far. I think it's important to take note of that.

Rex W. Tillerson, "Secretary of State Rex Tillerson Press Availability," [U.S. State Dept](#), 22 August 2017.

My comment is that, *if* we are to solve the North Korean problem by negotiations, then we need to treat North Korea as a sovereign nation that possesses both nuclear weapons and ICBMs, and *not* treat North Korea as a rogue nation that will become part of South Korea. Tillerson seems to treat North Korea as a child who is subject to our control and approval. Ideally, the U.S. would end military drills with South Korea and the six-party negotiations would agree on an armistice, in exchange for North Korea agreeing on a moratorium on tests of both nuclear weapons and ICBMs.

On the night of 22 August 2017, Trump spoke at a campaign rally in Phoenix Arizona and said the following about North Korea:

And you see what's going on in North Korea. All of a sudden, I don't know — who knows. But I can tell you, what I said, that's not strong enough. Some people said it's too strong, it's not strong enough.

But Kim Jong Un, I respect the fact that I believe he is starting to respect us. I respect that fact very much. Respect that fact.

And maybe — probably not — but maybe something positive can come about. They won't tell you that, but maybe something positive can come about.

Every American deserves a government that protects them, honors them, defends them, and fights for them.

Donald J. Trump, "President Trump Ranted For 77 Minutes in Phoenix. Here's What He Said," [Time](#), 23 August 2017.

My comment is that Trump's rant in Phoenix is *not* something that a mentally competent president would say. He only mentions the word "Korea" once. There is a lack of factual detail, only some vague, general statements. Trump's opinion that Kim is beginning "to respect us" is ludicrous — Kim and his father have been terrified of a U.S. invasion of North Korea, that is what motivated Kim and his father to seek nuclear weapons and ICBMs. The real issue, which Trump ignored, is how do we solve the North Korean problem. Trump

showed *no* understanding of history or facts, and offered *no* solution to the problem.

On 23 August 2017, North Korea released some photographs of Kim giving "field advice" to engineers who design missiles. On the wall are drawings of a three-stage missile that are more advanced than anything North Korea has tested. It is not known whether the North Koreans intended to show the drawings for the three-stage missile, but those drawings indicate an intent to develop longer range missiles. [Reuters](#); [New York Times](#); [BBC](#).

On 23 August 2017, [Politico](#) published an article by Siegfried Hecker, a metallurgist who was the director of the Los Alamos National Laboratory from 1986 to 1997 and who visited North Korea's nuclear facilities seven times, beginning in 2004. Dr. Heckler wrote: "Trump administration officials should talk with Pyongyang, face to face, without any preconditions," Later, Dr. Heckler wrote: "And we have to talk now, without demanding that North Korea agree to any preconditions, Pyongyang is not about to make unilateral concessions before talks." Dr. Heckler knows what he is talking about, unlike Trump and his associates. Tillerson and Mattis should listen to Dr. Heckler.

On the night of 25 August (Washington time), the North Koreans fired three missiles, which shattered Tillerson's illusion of North Korean restraint since the newest United Nations sanctions were announced on 5 August 2017. On 27 August, Tillerson appeared on the Fox News Sunday program and talked about North Korea:

CHRIS WALLACE: All right. Let's turn to your day job. North Korea fired three short-range missiles on Friday [25 August]. What message do you think the Kim regime is sending?

TILLERSON: Well, the firing of any ballistic missile is a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and we do view it as a provocative act, a provocative act against the United States and our allies. We continue to want the Kim regime to understand, there is a different path that he can choose. The international community has been quite clear with the unanimous 15-0 approval of the U.N. Security Council resolution imposing the most stringent sanctions ever to be imposed on North Korea.

There's also a unified international voice echoing our messages that no one wants to see a nuclear Korean peninsula. So, we are all unified in our mission to say (ph) denuclearize Korean peninsula. We hope for the opportunity to engage with them as to how we might achieve that.

WALLACE: This week, both — before the missile test, both you and the president suggested that Kim might be backing off of his missile program. Here both of you are.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

DONALD TRUMP, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: Kim Jong-un, I respect the fact that I believe he is starting to respect us.

TILLERSON: I am pleased to see that the regime in Pyongyang has certainly demonstrated some level of restraint that we've not seen in the past.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

WALLACE: Were both of you wrong about Kim?

TILLERSON: Well, I don't know that we're wrong, Chris. I think it's going to take some time to tell. This type of launch again, it is a violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. So, it is — clearly, they are still messaging us as well, that they are not prepared to completely back away from their position.

Having said that, we are going to continue our peaceful pressure campaign as I have described that working with allies, working with China as well, to see if we can bring the regime in Pyongyang to the negotiating table, with a view to begin a dialogue on the different future for Korean peninsula and for North Korea.

"Gov. Abbott on Harvey's impact, Secretary Tillerson talks North Korean threat, Afghanistan strategy," [Fox News](#), 27 August 2017.

Copy at [U.S. State Dept.](#)

North Korea violated the United Nations sanctions for the 13th time during the Trump presidency (see [list](#)), but Tillerson wants to "continue our peaceful pressure campaign" that has failed. Someday Tillerson will drop his preconditions on meeting with the North Koreans, and then it will appear that the North Koreans forced the USA to drop those preconditions. Trump himself had *no* public comment on the 26 August missile test by North Korea.

U.N. Response to 29 August Missile Test

On the morning of 29 August (Korean time), the North Koreans launched a missile that flew over Japan and landed in the northern Pacific Ocean. The flight over Japan was an extremely provocative move by the North Koreans. Japan, South Korea, and the USA requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to be held at 20:00 on 29 August (New York time).

On the morning of 29 August, the White House issued the following terse statement:

The world has received North Korea's latest message loud and clear: this regime has signaled its contempt for its neighbors, for all members of the United Nations, and for minimum standards of acceptable international behavior.

Threatening and destabilizing actions only increase the North Korean regime's isolation in the region and among all nations of the world. All options are on the table.

"Statement by President Donald J. Trump on North Korea," [White House](#), 29 August 2017.

On 5 August 2017, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations was delighted to approve the latest ineffective sanctions on North Korea. Just 24 days later, she — together with Japan and South Korea — was calling for *more* sanctions in a closed meeting of the Security Council. [Reuters](#) reported that China and Russia opposed new sanctions, because they support sanctions only for tests of nuclear weapons or ICBMs, not for intermediate-range missile tests. The Security Council issued a Presidential Statement, see list [above](#). During the

Security Council meeting, the U.S. Ambassador said: “The United States will not allow its [the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s] lawlessness to continue, and the rest of the world is with us.” [U.N.](#) After the Security Council meeting, the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations made a statement:

Thank you, Mr. President. We called this meeting tonight knowing that we had to come away unified. I personally appreciate your commitment and willingness to move quickly.

And, once again, all 15 members of the Security Council have spoken in unison. All of us: The United States, Japan, China, Russia, Europeans, Africans, South Americans. We are all together.

And what are we saying? We are all denouncing North Korea’s outrageous act against another UN Member State, Japan. We are all demanding North Korea stop any further missile launches. We are all demanding North Korea abandon its nuclear weapons.

North Korea has violated every single Security Council resolution, and violated international law. We are all calling on every nation to strictly, fully, and immediately implement all Security Council sanctions on North Korea.

The world is united against North Korea. There is no doubt about that. It is time for the North Korean regime to recognize the danger they are putting themselves in. The United States will not allow their lawlessness to continue. And the rest of the world is with us.

Nikki Haley, "Remarks Following the Adoption of a UN Security Council Statement Condemning North Korea's Latest Ballistic Missile Launch," [U.S. State Dept](#), 29 August 2017.

Haley bleated that the U.S. "will not allow" North Korea to continue to defy United Nations Resolutions, but the U.S. Government does *not* control North Korea. In fact, the U.S. Government has so little influence on North Korea, that the U.S. has repeatedly asked China to exert control over North Korea. Instead of making belligerent threats, demands, and pre-conditions for negotiations, the U.S. should resume six-party negotiations with North Korea.

Journalists reported that the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, said he would continue to launch ballistic missiles in defiance of United Nations Resolutions. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Korea Times](#). Kim's defiance means that more Resolutions, and more sanctions, are unlikely to stop the North Korean ballistic missile program. Kim may have chosen the 29 August launch date to vex Japan, because it is the anniversary day of the annexation of Korea by Japan in the year 1910. [Bloomberg](#).

On the morning of 30 August 2017, Trump complicated a bad situation with his tweet that contradicted Tillerson and Mattis:

The U.S. has been talking to North Korea, and paying them extortion money, for 25 years. Talking is not the answer!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 08:47 EDT, 30 August 2017.

The [Associated Press](#) explained: “According to the Congressional Research Service, between

1995 and 2008, the United States provided North Korea with more than \$1.3 billion in assistance: slightly more than 50 percent for food aid and about 40 percent for energy assistance. But since early 2009, the U.S. has provided virtually no aid to North Korea.”

Trump's tweet on 30 August is another example of his impulsiveness, his lack of consistency, and getting his facts wrong.

Later on 30 August, Mattis gently rebuked Trump, when Mattis told journalists: “We are never out of diplomatic solutions.” [Pentagon](#); [transcript](#).

The [Washington Post](#) published an article by Laura Rosenberger — a former member of the National Security Council and a member of the six-party talks with North Korea — that said: “So far, the Trump administration has been unable to execute a clear strategy for dealing with Kim [This mixed messaging] is an inability to execute on a strategy to deal with the most serious national security challenge we face.”

U.S. Navy incompetent

At a time when Trump is using the U.S. Military to intimidate North Korea, the U.S. Navy is demonstrating its lack of competence by twice colliding with cargo ships and having two other accidents since Trump became president.

1. On 31 January 2017, the guided-missile cruiser USS Antietam ran aground near the Yokosuka naval base in Japan.
2. On 9 May 2017, the guided-missile cruiser USS Lake Champlain collided with a South Korean fishing boat.
3. Before dawn on 17 June 2017, the destroyer USS Fitzgerald collided with a cargo ship off the coast of Japan. Seven sailors who were sleeping drowned. [Reuters](#); [Pentagon](#). On 17 August 2017, the Navy punished officers aboard the Fitzgerald for “poor seamanship”. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
4. Before dawn on 21 August 2017, the destroyer USS John S. McCain collided with an empty oil tanker near Singapore. Ten sailors died in the collision. [Associated Press](#)(21Aug); [Associated Press](#)(27Aug).

On 23 August 2017, the U.S. Navy relieved the commanding officer of the 7th Fleet. He was responsible for the four ships mentioned in the previous paragraphs. [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [CNN](#).

The punishment of senior officers on the USS Fitzgerald and relieving the commander of the 7th Fleet must be seen as an admission by the Navy that their officers had unacceptable conduct.

I remind the reader that on 9 April 2017 the U.S. Navy did *not* know whether the

U.S.S. Vinson was headed to Korea or [Australia](#).

September 2017: Continuing North Korean Problem

On 1 September in the USA, Trump called South Korean prime minister Moon. On the night of 2 September in the USA, Trump called Japanese prime minister Abe. Journalists reported that they pledged to increase pressure on North Korea to negotiate. [The Hill](#)(Moon); [Reuters](#)(Moon); [Reuters](#)(Abe). The U.S. White House website did not post a summary of these two conversations until 5 September, probably because they occurred during the Labor Day 3-day weekend: Moon on 1 Sep at [White House](#); Abe on 2 Sep at [White House](#).

On Sunday morning, 3 September 2017 in Korea, journalists reported that Kim Jong Un posed for photographs with a homemade hydrogen-bomb that could be fitted on an ICBM. There are two new things here. First, the alleged development of a hydrogen bomb, which is much more powerful than the atomic bombs that North Korea has tested in the past. Second, the alleged miniaturization of the hydrogen-bomb so it will fit on an ICBM. Note that there is *no* evidence that either alleged claim is true. [NHK](#); [Reuters](#).

On Sunday, 3 September 2017, at 12:29 South Korean time (23:29 EDT on 2 Sep in USA), North Korea conducted their sixth test of a nuclear weapon. [Associated Press](#); [Associated Press](#)(blog); [Reuters](#).

The U.S. Geological Survey said the underground test caused a magnitude 6.3 artificial earthquake, while the South Koreans claimed a magnitude 5.7 earthquake. Using the South Korean measurement, the test was 5 times stronger than the previous North Korean nuclear weapons test on 9 September 2016. Using the U.S. measurement, the test was 10 times stronger than the previous test, and is consistent with the test of a small hydrogen-bomb with an explosive yield of 100 kilotons of TNT. [Yonhap](#); [Reuters](#).

There is an interesting little detail that has been widely overlooked by journalists. Initial seismic reports mentioned *two* earthquakes, the second earthquake coming 8 minutes after the big earthquake from the nuclear weapon. It is suggested that the second earthquake was from collapse of tunnels at the test site that is buried under a mountain. [BBC](#); [ChosunIlbo](#). One Chinese geoscientist suggested the mountain at the test site was at risk of collapsing, which would release radioactive debris into the environment. [South China Morning Post](#). The radiation leak could contain debris from all six "successful" tests, plus any radioactive material from failed tests. *If* North Korea is concerned with protecting the environment, then they need to find a new test site for future tests of nuclear weapons — which could delay future tests.

Surely, diplomats had hoped that the North Koreans had ended their provocative tests of nuclear weapons. But the 3 September 2017 test proved the diplomats were wrong about restraint by North Korea. It is now obvious that economic sanctions have failed to alter North Korea's behavior, which pushes us closer to a military strike on North Korea.

On Sunday, 3 September 2017, Trump fired off a series of five tweets about North Korea:
North Korea has conducted a major Nuclear Test. Their words and actions continue to be very hostile and dangerous to the United States.....

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 07:30 EDT, 3 Sep 2017.

..North Korea is a rogue nation which has become a great threat and embarrassment to China, which is trying to help but with little success.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 07:39 EDT, 3 Sep 2017.

Trump took a cheap shot at the president of South Korea, who has wanted to negotiate with North Korea.

South Korea is finding, as I have told them, that their talk of appeasement with North Korea will not work, they only understand one thing!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 07:46 EDT, 3 Sep 2017.

I will be meeting General Kelly, General Mattis and other military leaders at the White House to discuss North Korea. Thank you.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 12:07 EDT, 3 Sep 2017.

Trump then threatened to end trade with China, amongst other nations that do business with North Korea:

The United States is considering, in addition to other options, stopping all trade with any country doing business with North Korea.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 12:14 EDT, 3 Sep 2017.

Notice that Trump did *not* confirm or reiterate the treaty obligation of the USA to defend South Korea and/or Japan. This omission of standard diplomatic language marks Trump as an amateur.

Separately on 2 September, Trump hinted the U.S. would abrogate the Free Trade Agreement between the U.S. and South Korea. [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#). My comment is that during a crisis with North Korea is a very poor time to withdraw from the trade agreement with South Korea, and harm the economy of our ally. Together with Trump's 3 September cheap shot at the South Korean president for "appeasement" of North Korea, Trump seems to have begun a battle with South Korea.

Then the U.S. Secretary of Defense issued a terse statement, part of which said:

Any threat to the United States, or its territories — including Guam — or our allies will be met with a massive military response — a response both effective and overwhelming.

Kim Jong Un should take heed the United Nations Security Council's unified voice — all members unanimously agreed on the threat North Korea poses, and they remain unanimous in their commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula — because we are not looking to the total annihilation of a country — namely, North Korea.

But, as I said, we have many options to do so. Thank you very much.
Jim Mattis, "Secretary Mattis Statement at the White House," [Pentagon](#), 3 Sep 2017.

To skip the United Nations Security Council response to the 3 September nuclear weapons test, go [here](#).

U.N. Response to 3 Sep Nuclear Weapon Test

Immediately, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, South Korea, and the USA requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council. The meeting was scheduled for 10:00 EDT on 4 Sep 2017. [U.S. State Dept.](#)

Here is the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations entire speech to the Security Council on 4 September 2017.

Thank you, Mr. President. And we want to thank you for allowing us to have this prompt meeting, as it's very urgent. And we also want to thank the Ambassador of Egypt and his team for the steady hand and the calm way in which he lead in this past month.

For more than 20 years, this Security Council has taken actions against North Korea's nuclear program. And for more than 20 years, North Korea has defied our collective voice. It's worth taking a few moments to recount some of the history.

In 1993, the Council approved Resolution 825 calling on North Korea to remain in the Nonproliferation Treaty. That didn't work. North Korea withdrew from the treaty and continued its nuclear pursuit.

In 2006, the Six Party Talks faltered, and North Korea conducted several ballistic missile launches. That led to Resolution 1695 condemning them.

The same year, North Korea conducted its first nuclear test. That led to Resolution 1718, establishing a UN sanctions regime, aiming to stop all nuclear, ballistic missile, and other weapons of mass destruction programs.

After Six Party Talks fell apart again in 2009, North Korea conducted additional missile launches and its second nuclear test. That led to Resolution 1874, which expanded sanctions, including an arms embargo and cargo inspection obligations.

In 2012, the Leap Day Deal failed, and North Korea conducted two new space launches. The Security Council responded with the adoption of Resolution 2087.

Following North Korea's third nuclear test in 2013, the Council adopted Resolution 2094, expanding sanctions to restrict financial, maritime, aviation, and diplomatic activities.

By 2016, North Korea had conducted its fourth nuclear test and another space launch. They followed that with more missile launches. In response, the Council adopted

multiple resolutions expanding sanctions even further, targeting whole sectors of North Korea's economy.

Finally, this year, the Council got even more serious.

First, we adopted Resolution 2356 designating high-ranking North Korean government officials and the military's Strategic Rocket Forces Command for individual sanctions. Then, just last month, after the regime's first two ICBM launches, we adopted Resolution 2371 — the strongest sanctions we have ever imposed on North Korea.

That resolution banned North Korean exports of coal, iron, and seafood, and imposed several other measures that will significantly cut off the revenues needed to fund their nuclear program.

Why did I take the time to go through this history?

To make this point. The United Nations Security Council has spoken with unusual unity and consistency on North Korea. That's a good thing. Along the way, there have been problems with implementation, and the Council has at times been too slow and too weak; but this is not a situation in which we have allowed divisions among us to stop any action.

Still, here we are.

Despite our efforts over the past 24 years, the North Korean nuclear program is more advanced and more dangerous than ever. They now fire missiles over Japanese air space. They now have ICBM capabilities.

They now claim to have tested a hydrogen bomb. And just this morning, there are reports that the regime is preparing for yet another ICBM launch.

To the members of the Security Council, I must say, "enough is enough."

We have taken an incremental approach, and despite the best of intentions, it has not worked.

Members of this Council will no doubt urge negotiations and a return to talks. But as I have just outlined, we have engaged in numerous direct and multilateral talks with the North Korean regime, and time after time, they have not worked.

The time for half measures in the Security Council is over. The time has come to exhaust all of our diplomatic means, before it's too late.

We must now adopt the strongest possible measures.

Kim Jong-Un's action cannot be seen as defensive. He wants to be acknowledged as a nuclear power. But being a nuclear power is not about using those terrible weapons to threaten others. Nuclear powers understand their responsibilities. Kim Jong-Un shows

no such understanding.

His abusive use of missiles, and his nuclear threats show that he is begging for war. War is never something the United States wants. We don't want it now. But our country's patience is not unlimited. We will defend our allies and our territory.

The idea that some have suggested of a so-called freeze-for-freeze is insulting. When a rogue regime has a nuclear weapon and an ICBM pointed at you, you do not take steps to lower your guard. No one would do that. We certainly won't.

The time has come to exhaust all diplomatic means to end this crisis, and that means quickly enacting the strongest possible measures here in the UN Security Council. Only the strongest sanctions will enable us to resolve this problem through diplomacy. We have kicked the can down the road long enough. There is no more road left.

This crisis goes well beyond the UN. The United States will look at every country that does business with North Korea as a country that is giving aid to their reckless and dangerous nuclear intentions.

And what we do on North Korea will have a real impact on how other outlaw nations who seek nuclear weapons choose to conduct themselves in the future.

The stakes could not be higher. The urgency is now.

Twenty-four years of half measures and failed talks is enough. Thank you.
Nikki Haley, "Remarks at an Emergency UN Security Council Briefing on North Korea," [U.S. State Dept](#), 4 September 2017.

In a later [statement](#), Haley said the U.S. would propose a draft Resolution and she wanted an 11 September vote on the final draft.

The United Nations Security Council [meeting record](#) is posted at their website, along with a [press release](#) that summarizes the meeting.

my comments on Haley's speech

I have several comments on Haley's speech, which displays U.S. Government policy.

Haley said "The idea that some have suggested of a so-called freeze-for-freeze is insulting." That refers to China's proposal that North Korea have a moratorium on tests of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles in exchange for a moratorium on U.S. Military exercises with South Korea. Haley seems to regard a moratorium on U.S. Military exercises with South Korea as blackmail, and she simply dismisses China's proposal.

Haley wants the United Nations to impose more sanctions on North Korea: "Only the strongest sanctions will enable us to resolve this problem through diplomacy." But in Haley's speech, she made the point that United Nations sanctions since 2006 had *failed*. Haley said:

"... the Council has at times been too slow and too weak". Although she did not say it, there are two main reasons why past sanctions have failed. First, rogue nations (e.g., China and Russia) continued trade with North Korea in defiance of the sanctions. Second, the North Korean government was willing to suffer effects of sanctions to pursue their programs to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

Haley said: "... we have engaged in numerous direct and multilateral talks with the North Korean regime, and time after time, they have not worked." That may be because the previous talks did *not* address the reason that the North Koreans want nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles. China's proposal does address that reason.

There is an unresolved inconsistency in Haley's speech. She said: "Only the strongest sanctions will enable us to resolve this problem through diplomacy." But she also said that "time after time, [talks with the North Koreans] have not worked." Haley does *not* explain why more sanctions will make diplomacy successful next time, when past sanctions have a spectacular 11-year record of failure.

Haley reminded the Security Council that on 5 August, "... we adopted Resolution 2371 — the strongest sanctions we have ever imposed on North Korea." What Haley did *not* explicitly say was that after those "strongest sanctions", the North Koreans fired an ICBM over Japan and then tested an alleged hydrogen-bomb. *If* those "strongest sanctions" had any effect on North Korea, it was to encourage North Korea to accelerate their provocative tests of weapons. What is clear is that North Korea is belligerently pursuing an aggressive policy of developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles that threatens South Korea, Japan, and the USA. Not only is North Korea continuing their policy of provocations, but also North Korea is becoming stronger and stronger. See the lists of North Korean [nuclear weapons](#) tests and [missile launches](#) in the introduction of this essay.

China and Russia want to restart the six-party talks. But there is *no* assurance that North Korea would attend if the talks were convened. As mentioned above, on 17 July 2017 the president of South Korea proposed talks with North Korea, but he was ignored by North Korea. From the perspective of North Korea, *why* should North Korea negotiate a moratorium on their tests of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles? At the moment, North Korea — an impoverished nation — is able to threaten the USA, South Korea, and Japan. That gives North Korea a kind of respect and importance that it has never had before, and is probably loath to abandon.

There was very little criticism of Haley's speech in the news media in the USA. One exception is an article at Fox News, by Judith Miller, who was formerly a reporter for *The New York Times*:

Rather than offer yet another resolution denouncing North Korea and calling for even stronger sanctions against dictator Kim Jong Un's brutal rogue regime, Ambassador Nikki Haley attacked China, the only country capable of isolating North Korea, calling its ambassador's proposal to the U.N. for defusing the crisis "insulting." Then [Haley] reiterated her administration's threats to use military force and total economic warfare against the North, both widely seen as empty threats given the grave damage either would inflict on America and our Asian allies.

....

Ambassador Haley's short statement seemed designed to out-Trump President Trump in bellicose rhetoric and empty threats. By saying that Mr. Kim was practically "begging for war" and that "enough is enough," she echoed Secretary of Defense James Mattis' threat to use military force to stop Kim's nuclear program and protect America and its allies. She also repeated Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin's threat to sever trade with any country which trades with North Korea, calling for the "toughest sanctions possible." Since more than 80 percent of its trade is with China, Ms. Haley was yet again threatening the only country capable of inflicting sufficient pain on North Korea to tempt it back to the negotiating table.

[Haley's] performance left seasoned U.N. and Asia analysts perplexed or downright alarmed. Abraham Denmark, a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia called the administration's response "chaotic." Robert Einhorn, a former senior State Department nonproliferation expert now at the Brookings Institution, called President Trump's tweets and conflicting policy statements "an incoherent mess."

....

Roughly 20 million people live in Seoul, within range of North Korean artillery, among them, roughly 140,000 Americans, 20,500 of them U.S. soldiers. Empty, too, is the bluster about cutting off all trade with countries which trade with North Korea. U.S.-China trade accounts for roughly 4 percent of U.S. GDP. Ending it would throw America's and the world's economy into turmoil.

Judith Miller, "To defeat North Korea, Trump (and his team) need to quit making empty threats, focus on a coordinated strategy," [Fox News](#), 5 Sep 2017.

More developments at United Nations

At 04:00 EDT on 4 September 2017, [Reuters](#) reported anonymous diplomats suggested the United Nations could consider:

- "banning Pyongyang's textile exports,
- banning the North's national airline,
- stop supplies of oil to the government and military,
- prevent North Koreans from working abroad, and
- add top officials to a blacklist to subject them to an asset freeze and travel ban."

The same information is also contained in an [Associated Press](#) article.

At 03:06 EDT on 5 September 2017, the [Associated Press](#) explained why China would *not* want to increase sanctions on North Korea: "Chinese leaders worry about instability on the Korean Peninsula if Kim's regime collapses, which would eliminate a buffer between China and South Korea, a heavily armed U.S. ally with American troops on its soil." Reducing oil shipments from China to North Korea "could rupture relations, wiping out any influence Beijing has over Pyongyang". China is reluctant to cut imports of textiles and clothing from

North Korea, because "That would hurt Chinese companies that are part of that supply chain, and ... Chinese leaders are eager to see [textile exports] develop as [a] way to make [North Korea] more prosperous and stable."

On 6 September 2017, [Reuters](#) and the [Associated Press](#) saw a confidential U.S. draft of a United Nations Security Council Resolution that will

1. prohibit exports of both crude oil and petroleum products to North Korea,
2. ban exports of textiles from North Korea,
3. prohibit employment of North Korean laborers in foreign nations, and
4. impose an asset freeze and travel ban on Kim Jong Un and four other senior officials.

On Friday, 8 September, the U.S. asked the Security Council for a vote on Monday, 11 September on the U.S. draft of the Resolution. [U.S. State Dept](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 10 September, [Reuters](#) reported that Nikki Haley had weakened her earlier draft to avoid vetoes by China and Russia. See also [Associated Press](#); [New York Times](#); [U.S. Fact Sheet](#). The changes include:

1. delete total ban on exports of petroleum to North Korea, insert cap on exports of refined petroleum products (e.g., gasoline, diesel, heavy fuel oil, etc.) at 2 million barrels a year, approximately a 55% reduction. Also insert cap on exports of crude oil to North Korea, at the level of the last 12 months.
2. change total ban on employment of North Korean laborers in foreign nations to prohibiting new work permits for North Korean laborers and also prohibiting renewals of current work permits for North Korean laborers.
3. delete asset freeze and travel ban on Kim Jong Un and three other senior officials.
4. delete asset freeze on North Korea's Air Koryo airline, the Korean People's Army, and five other government organizations.
5. delete authorization to use force to inspect 9 North Korean ships that had previously violated economic sanctions.

On 11 September, the United Nations Security Council voted unanimously to approve Nikki Haley's watered-down draft, which became Resolution 2375. After the vote, here is what Haley told the Security Council:

Thank you, Mr. President, and thank you for calling this meeting and allowing us to have this vote.

The images from space of northeast Asia at night show brightness and prosperity surrounding a dark, lonely space that is North Korea. Those images are a good illustration of where the North Korean regime is today. It is alone. It is dark. And it's getting darker.

North Korea's neighbors, its trading partners, and the entire international community are united against its dangerous and illegal actions. Today's resolution builds on what were already the deepest cutting sanctions ever leveled against North Korea. We've

been down this road before. The Security Council has expressed its condemnation. We've leveled sanctions. But today is different. We are acting in response to a dangerous new development: North Korea's September 3 test of a claimed hydrogen bomb.

Today, we are saying the world will never accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. And today, the Security Council is saying that if the North Korean regime does not halt its nuclear program, we will act to stop it ourselves.

Over the years, we have learned many things about the North Korean regime. We have learned that it does not care about being a part of the community of decent, law-abiding nations. It has violated every United Nations resolution against it. We have learned that the North Korean regime doesn't care about its own people. It has denied them the most basic necessities to finance its weapons program. And we have learned that half-measures against the regime have not worked.

Previous efforts to bring North Korea to the negotiating table have failed. They have repeatedly walked back every commitment they have made. Today, the Security Council has acted in a different way. Today, we are attempting to take the future of the North Korean nuclear program out of the hands of its outlaw regime.

We are done trying to prod the regime to do the right thing. We are now acting to stop it from having the ability to continue doing the wrong thing. We are doing that by hitting North Korea's ability to fuel and fund its weapons program. Oil is the lifeblood of North Korea's effort to build and deliver a nuclear weapon. Today's resolution reduces almost 30 percent of oil provided to North Korea by cutting off over 55 percent of its gas, diesel, and heavy fuel oil. Further, today's resolution completely bans natural gas and other oil byproducts that could be used as substitutes for the reduced petroleum. This will cut deep.

Further, a large portion of North Korea's revenues come from exports, revenues they use to fund their nuclear program. Last month, we passed a resolution banning its coal and iron exports. Today's resolution bans all textile exports. That's an almost \$800 million hit to its revenue.

When these new stronger sanctions are added to those passed last month, over 90 percent of North Korea's publicly reported exports are now fully banned. Moreover, this resolution also puts an end to the regime making money from the 93,000 North Korean citizens it sends overseas to work and heavily taxes. This ban will eventually starve the regime of an additional \$500 million or more in annual revenues. Beyond the \$1.3 billion in annual revenues we will cut from North Korea, new maritime authorities will help us stop them from obtaining funds by smuggling coal and other prohibited materials around the world by ship.

Furthermore, this resolution prohibits all joint ventures with the regime, resulting in a significant amount of lost revenue. But more importantly, the regime can no longer obtain critically needed foreign investments, technology, and know-how needed for its commercial industries.

Finally, this resolution imposes asset freezes on the most central North Korean regime entities, affecting both the military and the government itself. In short, these are by far the strongest measures ever imposed on North Korea. They give us a much better chance to halt the regime's ability to fuel and finance its nuclear and missile programs.

But we all know these steps only work if all nations implement them completely and aggressively. Today's resolution would not have happened without the strong relationship that has developed between President Trump and Chinese President Xi, and we greatly appreciate both teams working with us. We have seen additional encouraging signs that other nations in Asia have stepped up to the plate. The Philippines has cut off all trade with Pyongyang. Thailand has drastically cut its economic ties with North Korea. And states much further away are also doing their part. Mexico recently declared the North Korean ambassador to its country *persona non grata*. Along with strictly enforcing sanctions, these are important steps toward complete international unity. They make clear that all nations can act to deny North Korea the funds to build its nuclear arsenal.

Today is a solemn day in the United States. It is the 16th anniversary of the terrorist attacks that killed nearly three thousand innocent people — most of them in this very city. It hurts as much today as it did 16 years ago. We will never forget the victims of September 11. And we will never forget the lesson that those who have evil intentions must be confronted.

That day, the United States saw that mass murder can come from a clear blue sky, on a beautiful Tuesday morning. But today, the threat to the United States and the world is not coming out of the blue.

The North Korean regime has demonstrated that it will not act on its own to end its nuclear program. The civilized world must do what the regime refuses to do. We must stop its march toward a nuclear arsenal with the ability to deliver it anywhere in the world. We must do that by cutting off the fuel and the funding that supports it.

We don't take pleasure in further strengthening sanctions today. We are not looking for war. The North Korean regime has not yet passed the point of no return. If it agrees to stop its nuclear program, it can reclaim its future. If it proves it can live in peace, the world will live in peace with it.

On the other hand, if North Korea continues its dangerous path, we will continue with further pressure. The choice is theirs.

Nikki Haley, "Remarks Following the Adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2375 on North Korea Sanctions," [U.S. State Dept](#), 11 Sep 2017.

The Associated Press reported:

But [the Resolution's] provisions are a significant climb-down from the very tough sanctions the Trump administration proposed last Tuesday [5 Sep], especially on oil, where a complete ban could have crippled North Korea's economy.

The cap on the import of petroleum products could have an impact, but North Korea will still be able to import the same amount of crude oil that it has this year.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, China supplies most of North Korea's crude oil imports, which a U.S. official put at 4 million barrels a year. The agency cited U.N. customs data showing that China reported sending 6,000 barrels a day of oil products to North Korea, which it said is mostly gasoline and diesel fuel vital to the country's agriculture, transportation and military sectors.

That would mean North Korea imports nearly 2.2 million barrels a year in petroleum products, so the 2 million barrel cap in the resolution would represent a 10 percent cut. But the U.S. official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said North Korea now receives about 4.5 million barrels of refined petroleum products, which would mean a more than 50 percent cut.

The textile ban is significant. Textiles are North Korea's main source of export revenue after coal, iron, seafood and other minerals that have already been severely restricted by previous U.N. resolutions. North Korean textile exports in 2016 totaled \$752.5 million, accounting for about one-fourth of its total \$3 billion in merchandise exports, according to South Korean government figures.

....

As for North Koreans working overseas, the U.S. Mission said a cutoff on new work permits will eventually cost North Korea about \$500 million a year once current work permits expire. The U.S. estimates about 93,000 North Koreans are currently working abroad, the U.S. official said.

....

China and Russia had called for a resolution focused on a political solution to the escalating crisis over North Korea's nuclear program. They have proposed a freeze-for-freeze that would halt North Korean nuclear and missile tests in exchange for the U.S. and South Korea stopping their joint military exercises — but the Trump administration has rejected that.

Edith M. Lederer, "UN approves watered-down new sanctions against North Korea," [Associated Press](#), 21:02 EDT, 11 Sep 2017.

The United Nations Security Council [meeting record](#) is posted at their website, along with a [press release](#) that summarizes the meeting.

On 12 September 2017, Yonhap News Agency in South Korea predicted that the new economic sanctions in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2375 would *not* change North Korea's behavior. Yonhap quoted an anonymous "North Korea expert" as saying: "The North is unlikely to come out to negotiate until it announces the completion of its nuclear capabilities. Until that time, the U.S. will continue to impose additional sanctions and the North will continue to seek provocations. Eventually, we will have to get to the endgame. Before that part comes, the U.S. seems to have cards left that it can

use.”

Koh Byung-joon, "UNSC resolution insufficient to change N.K. behavior, signals tougher action ready: experts," [Yonhap](#), 12 Sep 2017.

The [Korea Times](#) reported that the new sanctions will *not* stop the North Korean nuclear and ICBM programs.

At noon EDT on 12 September, Trump criticized U.N. Resolution 2375:

We had a vote yesterday on sanctions. We think it's just another very small step — not a big deal. Rex [Tillerson] and I were just discussing — not big. I don't know if it has any impact, but certainly it was nice to get a 15-to-nothing vote. But those sanctions are nothing compared to what ultimately will have to happen.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak of Malaysia Before Bilateral Meeting," [White House](#), 12 Sep 2017.

I am concerned that the ban on export of clothing (i.e., textiles) by North Korea will encourage the North Korean government to illegally export more weapons and munitions. The North Koreans have abundant experience in evading sanctions. We should be encouraging the North Koreans to diversify their manufacturing away from weapons and towards consumer items, such as clothing.

So what did U.N. Resolution 2375 accomplish? In the short term, it made matters worse, as the North Koreans promise to accelerate their development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, and — of course — North Korea will defy the sanctions. Bloomberg News reported:

In its first official response to the new resolution, North Korea's foreign ministry released a statement on state-run media saying the sanctions justified its nuclear push and strengthened its will to “follow this road at a faster pace without the slightest diversion until this fight to the finish is over.”

“The adoption of another illegal and evil ‘resolution on sanctions’ piloted by the U.S. served as an occasion for the DPRK to verify that the road it chose to go down was absolutely right,” the ministry said, according to the Korean Central News Agency.

“The DPRK will redouble the efforts to increase its strength to safeguard the country's sovereignty and right to existence,” KCNA said, using the country's formal name.

Kanga Kong, "North Korea Slams 'Evil' Sanctions, Vows Faster Nuclear Push,"

[Bloomberg News](#), 23:10 EDT, 12 September 2017.

See also [Reuters](#).

The launch of another North Korean missile over Japan on the morning of 15 September 2017 (Korean time) — approximately three days after U.N. Resolution 2375 was passed — shows this Resolution will *not* stop North Korean development of prohibited weapons.

U.N. experts say North Korea evaded sanctions

The United Nations Security Council Resolution 1874 at §26 created a committee of experts to review sanctions on North Korea. On 5 September 2017, those experts reported in [S/2017/742](#) that North Korea was evading economic sanctions. [S/2017/742](#) at ¶70 says "During the reporting period [28 February 2017 to 5 August 2017], the Democratic People's

Republic of Korea continued to export prohibited commodities to generate at least [US]\$ 270 million." At ¶79: "Following China's suspension of the import of coal from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as from 19 February 2017, the [DPRK] started to diversify the countries to which it exports coal to include Malaysia and Viet Nam." And at ¶28: "The Panel is investigating reported prohibited chemical, ballistic missile and conventional arms cooperation between the Syrian Arab Republic and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea including activities on Syrian Scud missile programmes and maintenance and repair of Syrian surface-to-air missile air defence systems."

Although exports of clothing from North Korea are not yet prohibited, North Korean sweatshops are already sewing "Made in China" labels in their clothing, as reported on 12 August 2017 by [Reuters](#). Aside from economic sanctions, informed consumers would be loath to purchase items with a "Made in North Korea" label, so simple fraud by North Korea makes their merchandise more appealing.

On 7 September, the [Wall Street Journal](#) and [Foreign Policy](#) were among the first journalists to publicize this September Report by the experts.

On the night of 9 September 2017, the Associated Press reported:

North Korea illegally exported coal, iron and other commodities worth at least \$270 million to China and other countries including India, Malaysia and Sri Lanka in the six-month period ending in early August in violation of U.N. sanctions, U.N. experts say.

The experts monitoring sanctions said in a report released Saturday [9 Sep] that Kim Jong Un's government continues to flout sanctions on commodities as well as an arms embargo and restrictions on shipping and financial activities.

....

The experts said implementation of existing sanctions "lags far behind what is necessary to achieve the core goal of denuclearization" of the Korean peninsula.

They blamed "lax enforcement" of sanctions coupled North Korea's "evolving evasion techniques" for undermining the achievement of this goal which would see the North abandon all weapons of mass destruction.

On the export of commodities — a key source of foreign exchange for the DPRK — the experts said that following China's suspension of coal imports from the North in February, the DPRK has been rerouting coal to other countries including Malaysia and Vietnam.

Edith M. Lederer, "UN experts: NKorea exported \$270 million illegally recently," [Associated Press](#), 20:58 EDT, 9 Sep 2017.

The president of the U.N. Security Council scheduled a meeting on 11 September to discuss the U.N. experts' report. Ironically, the meeting on the experts' report occurred immediately before the vote on Nikki Haley's draft resolution for *more* economic sanctions. The meeting was closed to the public.

My comment is that diplomats in the U.S., South Korea, and Japan continue to call for *more* economic sanctions on North Korea. But those same diplomats have *failed* to enforce past economic sanctions, ignoring violations by numerous rogue nations. The refusal of those diplomats to enforce past sanctions since 2006 is responsible for the failure of those sanctions. The failure of past economic sanctions helped finance North Korea's continuing programs of developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

On 11 September 2017, the [Washington Post](#) published an article that explained how Russian smugglers are helping North Korea evade U.N. economic sanctions.

On 1 October 2017, the [Washington Post](#) revealed that Egypt had ordered "more than 30,000 rocket-propelled grenades" from North Korea, which were delivered in August 2016.

4-15 Sep 2017: Continuing North Korean Problem

Currently, a U.S.-South Korean agreement limits South Korean missiles to a maximum payload of 500 kg. During a telephone call between Trump and Moon on 4 September, Trump agreed to remove that limit. [White House](#); [Reuters](#). Soon the South Koreans will be able to shoot missiles with much larger warheads into North Korea. This is just one of many ways that the provocative North Korean tests of nuclear weapons have made North Korea *less* secure. During the cold war in the 1960s and 1970s, the USA and Russia realized that an arms race makes everyone *less secure*, but North Korea has not yet understood that lesson.

On the night of 4 September 2017, I looked at the websites of the Russian and Chinese missions to the United Nations, to quote their reaction to North Korea's test of a nuclear weapon. In response to Haley's assertion that the Chinese proposal "is insulting", the Russian Ambassador [replied](#): "I didn't respond to that but I was wondering really what is insulting about that? This is the only proposal for political way out of this situation which is on the table at the moment."

The Chinese mission to the United Nations has a [website](#), but on 4 Sep 2017 there was *no* mention of the North Korean problem. The Chinese website does *not* include North Korea in their "Regional Hotspot Issues" for Asia. A search of the Chinese website for "Korea" shows the most recent webpage is a 5 August [statement](#) after the adoption of Resolution 2371.

On 5 September 2017, the United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, gave a press conference on a wide range of topics. Here is what he said about the North Korean problem.

The latest nuclear and missile tests by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea are profoundly destabilizing for regional and international security. I condemn them unequivocally.

Yet again, the DPRK has broken the global norm against nuclear test explosions.

Yet again, the country has defied the Security Council and the international community.

Yet again, the DPRK has needlessly and recklessly put millions of people at risk — including its own citizens already suffering drought, hunger and serious violations of their human rights.

I call again on the DPRK authorities to comply fully with its international obligations, including Security Council Resolution 2371 adopted last month.

I welcome yesterday's meeting of the Council. The unity of the Council is crucial in addressing this crisis.

That unity also creates an opportunity to engage diplomatically to decrease tensions, increase confidence and prevent any escalation — all aimed at the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Let us promote the dialogue and communication necessary to avoid miscalculation [or] misunderstanding.

Confrontational rhetoric may lead to unintended consequences.

The solution must be political. The potential consequences of military action are too horrific.

As Secretary-General, I am ready to support any efforts towards a peaceful solution of this alarming situation, and as I said, to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

....

QUESTION: Mr Secretary-General, on North Korea, do you think the Russian-Chinese proposal for freeze, for a freeze, should be entertained by the US? And, in terms of... you said you would support, but how about meeting efforts? Would you meet with the Foreign Minister of North Korea when he's in town in two weeks? Would you like to go to North Korea to meet with the leadership there?

Secretary-General: Well, I think what is important is the capacity of the Sec... that all members of the Security Council to come together and of the five countries that deal with [the Democratic People's Republic of] Korea in the framework, the past framework of the six-party talks to be entirely united. So, my appeal is not for any specific solution. It is for the capacity to people to come together and make it clear to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that they need to negotiate in order for the achievement of the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. I know that the leverage of the UN is limited. I know that our capacity is limited. I've just signalled to the parties that I'm entirely at their disposal, but I recognise that what is crucial here is the unity of the Security Council and the capacity of the five countries to come together with a single strategy to deal with the Government of the DPRK.

....

QUESTION: which issue do you think will be the most focussed for world leaders when they meet here the High-Level Week?

I think the most dangerous crisis we face today, the crisis related to the nuclear risk in relation to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We all have the experience of the First World War. Wars usually do not start by a decision taken in a moment by the parties to go to war. If you look at the history of the First World War, it was on a step-by-step basis, one party doing one thing, the other party doing another, and then an escalation taking place. And, as a book called *The Sleepwalkers* described in an extremely effective way, all of a sudden, the parties discovered they are at war. This is the risk we need to avoid in relation to the situation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Antonio Guterres, "Secretary-General's press encounter," [U.N.](#), 5 September 2017.

I agree that Trump should stop his "confrontational rhetoric", because Trump is making a solution to the problem more difficult, by exciting the North Koreans. Also, there is a danger that Trump may take his threats seriously in the future and impulsively order a pre-emptive military strike on North Korea. Furthermore, the North Koreans may misunderstand Trump's empty threats or bluffs. On the other hand, I suggest that it is futile to ask the North Koreans to stop their "confrontational rhetoric". Instead, I urge that we focus on stopping the development of North Korean nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

The Secretary General calls for negotiations. But it is *not* clear that the North Koreans *want* to negotiate. Also, the United Nations is stuck on its dogma about "denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula", which will be unacceptable to North Korea.

On 5 September 2017, the White House press spokesperson said pushing for "denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" was Trump's priority. Talks with North Korea are *not* a priority: "now is not the time for us to spend a lot of time focused on talking with North Korea". [White House](#); [Reuters](#). In my opinion, Trump is wrong. He should be pursuing talks with North Korea to resolve this problem.

On 5 September 2017, the North Korean ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Han Tae Song, announced that "The recent self-defence measures by my country, DPRK, are a 'gift package' addressed to none other than the U.S." He added: "The U.S. will receive more 'gift packages' from my country as long as it relies on reckless provocations and futile attempts to put pressure on the DPRK." [Reuters](#). My comment is that North Korea does *not* need nuclear weapons and ICBMs to deter an invasion of North Korea — conventional artillery aimed at Seoul has been an adequate deterrent. Further, the past history of belligerent acts shows that North Korea is untrustworthy with any weapons of mass destruction (i.e., nuclear, chemical, biological weapons). Reading the numerous United Nations Security Council Resolutions shows the nations of the world are unanimous that North Korea should *not* have either nuclear weapons or ballistic missiles. North Korea has not only defied these Resolutions since 2006, but also intends to continue to defy these Resolutions (i.e., "more gift packages"). I suspect that North Korea will continue these

prohibited tests, even if the U.S. Government stopped its "provocations and futile attempts to put pressure on the DPRK."

On 6 September 2017, Eric Talmadge — the Associated Press bureau chief in Pyongyang — wrote an insightful article that quotes three experts on North Korea.

1. Vipin Narang, a nuclear strategy and nonproliferation expert at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, believes U.S. policymakers need to let [deterrence is about making sure your opponent has no good military moves] sink in.

“Saying that this nuclear program has not augmented or improved North Korea’s ability to deter particular actions, especially regime change or invasion or disarmament, is simply denying reality and putting our head in the sand,” he said.

....

Upping the game will require two things Narang believes are now lacking: a coherent and unified message to Pyongyang from President Donald Trump’s administration, and strong, believable reassurances to America’s regional allies.

....

Moreover, the different messages coming from the White House, State Department and Department of Defense — ranging from Trump threatening “fire and fury” to the more conciliatory tone of Secretary of State Rex Tillerson — Pyongyang has more incentive to push ahead quickly to either take advantage of what it sees as weakness or bolster its capabilities ahead of what it fears to be a looming invasion.

....

And maybe one more thing. Tone down the tweets. “When President Trump tweets the day after the alleged H-bomb test that South Korea should stop ‘appeasement’ of North Korea, Pyongyang can be nothing short of delighted at its strategy [of creating discord among the U.S., Japan, South Korea, and China] working,” Narang said.

2. ... China’s and Russia’s national interests aren’t the same as Washington’s. Shifting the onus to them for a solution diminishes U.S. leadership and control, said Joel Wit, a senior fellow at the Johns Hopkins’ School of Advanced International Studies and a former State Department official who developed strategies to deal with the crisis over North Korea’s weapons program in the 1990s.

....

[Wit] said that instead of pointing fingers, Washington needs to accept that the core problem is between the U.S. and North Korea and firmly take the wheel.

3. If the U.S. is going to get what it wants, it has to know what it wants. And it will probably need to give up something to get it.

John Delury, an associate professor of Chinese studies at Yonsei University in Seoul, believes the most realistic path forward involves three steps: “dialogue, negotiation, settlement.”

....

Washington’s focus [in negotiations] should be clear and specific. Negotiators should push for a missile and nuclear test moratorium, a freeze on the production of nuclear weapons, the return of nuclear inspectors and increased transparency. There must also be nonproliferation commitments.

Eric Talmadge, "How can US stop North Korea nukes? 3 experts have ideas," [Associated Press](#), 03:20 EDT, 6 September 2017. [Indented list with three numbers added by Standler, to clearly separate the three experts.]

On 6 September 2017, Trump told journalists:

President Xi [of China] would like to do something. We’ll see whether or not he can do it. But we will not be putting up with what’s happening in North Korea. I believe that President Xi agrees with me 100 percent. He doesn’t want to see what’s happening there, either.

Donald J. Trump, *not* posted at the White House website, 6 Sep 2017.

Quoted by Anne Gearan, "Trump’s zigzagging approach to North Korea veers toward military options," [Washington Post](#), 6 Sep 2017. Gearan wrote: "... the zigzagging U.S. response and the president’s willingness to talk openly about a military attack could be creating its own set of problems by raising the price of an eventual deal and probably making negotiations impossible for now, Asia security analysts said."

Quoted by Jeff Mason & Michael Martina, "Trump says U.S. not 'putting up with' North Korea's actions," [Reuters UK](#) or [Reuters USA](#), 6 September 2017.

My comment is that the USA has been "putting up with" (i.e., tolerating) North Korea's belligerent actions, including tests of nuclear weapons and tests of ballistic missiles, since 2006. Except for a forbidden military strike on North Korea's weapons manufacturing plants, Trump has *no* choice — Trump must accept as reality North Korea's current weapons development program.

On 7 September 2017, the White House had a moment of realism. An anonymous staffer told the [Washington Post](#) and [Reuters](#): "We are very concerned that North Korea might not be able to be deterred, that there are real differences between North Korea and the small, small group of nations that have these weapons." My comment is that, while the pessimism by the White House is realistic, North Korea's inability to be deterred might have been inspired by bluffs and empty threats by Trump, which eroded the credibility of the White House.

Anyway, negotiations *might* provide a tolerable solution to the problem, if the warmongers in

the White House can be muzzled long enough for diplomats to do their job.

The numerous United Nations Resolutions condemning North Korea's tests of ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons expresses the outrage of the international community. On 7 September, Mexico expelled the ambassador from North Korea as persona non grata following the test of an alleged hydrogen-bomb. The ambassador has 72 hours to leave Mexico. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [Los Angeles Times](#). Mexico began a flood of similar expulsions:

2. On 11 September, Peru expelled the ambassador from North Korea as persona non grata following the test of an alleged hydrogen-bomb. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
3. On 17 September, Kuwait expelled the ambassador from North Korea. Kuwait's decision is significant because there are approximately 3000 North Korean laborers living in Kuwait. Although other Arab nations employ North Koreans, Kuwait had the only North Korean embassy amongst Arab nations. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).
4. On 18 September, Spain expelled the ambassador from North Korea, because of his country's continuing nuclear weapons program. [Reuters](#).
5. On 2 October, [Reuters](#) reported that Italy will expel North Korea's ambassador.

Expelling the North Korean ambassadors shows that North Korea is a pariah nation, and is a different expression of outrage of the international community from passing U.N. Resolutions that condemn North Korea.

On 11 September, I noticed that Tillerson had been publicly silent on North Korea during the past two weeks. On 22 August 2017, Tillerson praised the North Koreans on their restraint, then the North Koreans fired three short-range missiles into the Sea of Japan, launched a missile over Japan, and detonated an alleged hydrogen bomb. Tillerson last publicly spoke about North Korea on a Fox News program on 27 August. On 14 September, [Korea Times](#) reported that the U.S. and North Korea recently held a secret "back channel" conversation in Switzerland.

On 12 September, the U.S. Treasury secretary was in New York City, where he said in an interview:

STEVEN MNUCHIN: I think we have absolutely moved the needle on China. I think what they agreed to yesterday [11 Sep] was historic. I'd also say I put sanctions on a major Chinese bank. That's the first time that's ever been done. And if China doesn't follow these sanctions, we will put additional sanctions on them and prevent them from accessing the U.S. and international dollar system. And that's quite meaningful.

"CNBC Exclusive: CNBC's "Squawk Box" Interviews Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin from CNBC Institutional Investor Delivering Alpha Conference Today," [CNBC](#), 12 Sep 2017.

In the early morning of 13 September, Reuters reported:

... comments on Tuesday [12 Sep] by the North's ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, Han Tae Song, who said Pyongyang was "ready to use a form of ultimate

means". "The forthcoming measures ... will make the U.S. suffer the greatest pain it ever experienced in its history," Han said.

....

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin warned China, North Korea's main ally and trading partner, that Washington would "put additional sanctions on them and prevent them from accessing the U.S. and international dollar system" if it did not follow through on the new measures.

Another senior administration official told Reuters any such "secondary sanctions" on Chinese banks and other companies were on hold for now to give China time to show it was prepared to fully enforce the latest and previous rounds of sanctions.

Jack Kim & Roberta Rampton, "North Korea defiant over U.N. sanctions as Trump says tougher steps needed," [Reuters](#), 07:30 GMT, 13 Sep 2017.

On 6 July 2017 and again on 12 September 2017, the South Korean government revealed that they are training a "decapitation squad" to go inside North Korea and assassinate Kim Jong Un. [Chosun Ilbo](#); [New York Times](#). In my opinion it is incredibly stupid to publicize this decapitation squad, because it will make Kim even more paranoid and more convinced that he needs nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

On 13 September 2017, there were hints that China was more concerned about North Korea's nuclear weapons and less concerned about having North Korea as a buffer against the capitalist South Korean nation. [Yonhap](#); [Hankyoreh](#). This change in China's policy could signal an increased willingness of the Chinese government to enforce economic sanctions on North Korea.

On 14 September 2017, North Korea spewed some inflammatory, bellicose, meaningless threats. First, the Korean Central News Agency declared: "The four islands of the [Japanese] archipelago should be sunken into the sea by the nuclear bomb of Juche. Japan is no longer needed to exist near us." (Juche is a military-first, self-reliant philosophy created by Kim's grandfather, who was the first dictator of North Korea.) Second, the KCNA declared: "Let's reduce the U.S. mainland into ashes and darkness. Let's vent our spite with mobilization of all retaliation means which have been prepared till now." [Reuters](#). My comment is that the KCNA propaganda is hyperbole, because it would take more hydrogen-bombs than North Korea can manufacture to "sink" part of one of the Japanese islands. The threat to reduce the USA to ashes is hyperbole, because the USA has a very large geographical area. The KCNA statements about sinking Japan and reducing the USA to ashes should be ignored, as hyperbole. When the North Koreans develop a reliable ICBM that can carry a hydrogen-bomb to Kansas, detonating that one warhead in the ionosphere above Kansas could create an electromagnetic pulse that could knock out the electric power grid in much of the USA. Further, North Korea is moving closer to its goal of being able to deliver a hydrogen-bomb to annihilate cities in the USA.

14 Sep 2017: Another North Korean Missile Test

Early Friday morning, 15 September, Korean time (about 18:00 EDT on 14 September in the USA), North Korea launched a missile that flew over Japan. Citations to news articles are provided [above](#).

Back on 8 August 2017, North Korea threatened to launch four missiles at Guam, but on 15 August North Korea backed away from its threat. Guam is 3400 kilometers from Pyongyang, while the most recent North Korean missile traveled 3700 kilometers — proving that North Korea *could* accomplish its threat. But the accuracy of the North Korean missile remains unproven and it is unknown if the North Korean missile could carry a heavy nuclear warhead all the way to Guam.

On the night of 14 September, Tillerson ended his silence on North Korea since 27 August: North Korea's provocative missile launch represents the second time the people of Japan, a treaty ally of the United States, have been directly threatened in recent weeks.

These continued provocations only deepen North Korea's diplomatic and economic isolation.

United Nations Security Council resolutions, including the most recent unanimous sanctions resolution, represent the floor, not the ceiling, of the actions we should take. We call on all nations to take new measures against the Kim regime.

China supplies North Korea with most of its oil. Russia is the largest employer of North Korean forced labor.

China and Russia must indicate their intolerance for these reckless missile launches by taking direct actions of their own.

Rex W. Tillerson, "North Korea's Missile Launch," [U.S. State Dept](#), 14 Sep 2017.

The english-language website of the Chinese government news agency posted the following propaganda:

"China opposes DPRK ballistic missile launches against the UN Security Council resolutions," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said.

"Currently the situation on the Korean Peninsula is complex, sensitive and serious. All parties concerned should exercise restraint and avoid any acts that may escalate tensions," Hua said.

In response to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's statement calling on China and Russia to take "direct actions" to rein in the DPRK, Hua said China has comprehensively and completely implemented Security Council resolutions and made great sacrifices for this.

"There is no doubt about China's sincerity and efforts in carrying out its international obligations, and its determination to realize denuclearization on the peninsula and uphold the nuclear non-proliferation regime," said Hua.

She said the essence of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue is a security issue and the

crux is the disagreements between the DPRK and the United States.

"China is neither the focus of the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, nor the core to resolving the issue. Neither is it the propellant of the current tensions," she said, urging parties directly concerned to take up their due responsibilities.

"China opposes DPRK's missile launch: FM spokesperson," [Xinhuanet](#), 15 Sep 2017.

Note that Hua ignores that 90% of North Korea's imports/exports are with China, so China has significant control of North Korea's foreign trade and international banking. Hua also ignores that China — together with Russia — has protected North Korea from more severe sanctions by the United Nations Security Council. Further, Hua ignores that China has assisted North Korea in evading U.N. sanctions. And responding to China's propaganda, I have huge "doubts about China's sincerity and efforts", given their past history. However, I do agree with China urging reduction in tensions (i.e., North Korea stops tests, *and* the USA stops military exercises in or near Korea).

The U.S. National Security Advisor, General H.R. McMaster, and the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, appeared at the White House press briefing on Friday, 15 September.

QUESTION: Thank you, General. My question is about North Korea, which is perhaps the biggest foreign policy challenge for President Trump right now. About a month ago, the President issued a threat to North Korea; he warned of "fire and fury." And as you know, Ambassador, at the U.N. Security Council you've imposed tougher sanctions on North Korea. Both of these efforts do not seem to be changing their behavior. Is it time for the U.S. to change its approach to North Korea? Is that something that you're contemplating? And, General, if you could weigh on this well. I appreciate it.

AMBASSADOR HALEY: I think what was really important with North Korea was that we try and push through as many diplomatic options as we have. If you look at the resolutions that have passed in the last month, the two of them, they cut 30 percent of the oil. They banned all the laborers. They banned 90 percent of the exports. They banned joint ventures. We've basically taken and, in the words of North Korea, we have strangled their economic situation at this point. That's going to take a little bit of time, but it has already started to take effect.

What we are seeing is they continue to be provocative, they continue to be reckless. And at that point, there's not a whole lot the Security Council is going to be able to do from here when you've cut 90 percent of the trade and 30 percent of the oil.

So, having said that, I have no problem kicking it to General Mattis, because I think he has plenty of options.

GENERAL MCMASTER: I'd just emphasize the point that Ambassador Haley made. These sanctions are just now taking effect. What's really important is rigorous enforcement of those sanctions so that we can really let the economic actions and diplomacy progress as best we can. But I think we ought to make clear what's different about this approach is, is that we're out of time, right? As Ambassador Haley said before, we've been kicking the can down the road, and we're out of road.

And so for those who have said and have been commenting about the lack of a military option, there is a military option. Now, it's not what we would prefer to do, so what we have to do is call on all nations, call on everyone to do everything we can to address this global problem short of war.

So that is implementing now these significant sanctions that have just now gone into place, and it is convincing everyone to do everything that they can and that it's in their interest to do it.

What's different, I think, about this approach to North Korea is worth noting. First of all, there is consensus among all key nations that denuclearization of the Peninsula is the only acceptable objective.

The second thing is, this is not an issue between the United States and North Korea. This is an issue between the world and North Korea.

And the third recognition is, there is a lot that we can about it together. And so we need time, obviously, for any strategy to work. It is a sound approach to a very difficult problem, and we'll see if it succeeds.

"Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders, National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster, and U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley," [White House](#), 13:21 EDT, 15 Sep 2017.

To skip the United Nations Security Council response to the 14 September missile test, go [here](#).

15 Sep 2017: U.N. Response to 14 Sep Missile Test

The North Korean missile was launched only three days after the United Nations Security Council approved Resolution 2375. Japan and the U.S. immediately requested an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, which was scheduled for 15:00 EDT on Friday, 15 September. The meeting was closed to the public, so few details are available. The Security Council issued a press statement, which was not posted at the U.N. website until Sunday, 17 September. The U.N. Security Council commonly uses a press statement to condemn a terrorist attack by a nonmember of the United Nations (e.g., ISIL), see [U.N.S.C.](#) In my opinion, this emergency meeting of the Security Council was a fizzle, because it produced *no* new sanctions on North Korea, despite the continuing open defiance of U.N. Resolutions by North Korea.

The United Nations News Centre promptly posted a news [article](#). A few journalists reported the emergency meeting. See, e.g., [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). However, the top news story on 15 September was the Islamic terrorist attack on the London subway, and the U.N. news about North Korea was ignored.

16-30 Sep 2017:

Continuing North Korean Problem

On 17 September, Trump sarcastically referred to Kim Jong Un as "Rocket Man":

I spoke with President Moon of South Korea last night. Asked him how Rocket Man is doing. Long gas lines forming in North Korea. Too bad!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 07:53 EDT, 17 Sep 2017.

Taunting an angry, hostile nation that has nuclear weapons is *not* a mature, rational act. Trump's assertion about "long gas lines" is a false fact. [Washington Post](#); [PolitiFact](#). Trump's continuing invective and threats are making the North Korean problem worse.

Later on 17 September, Nikki Haley appeared on CNN to emphasize that the U.S. is considering a military strike on North Korea. Sadly, *no* transcript of her remarks is available.

We wanted to be responsible and go through all diplomatic means to get [North Korea's] attention first. If that doesn't work, General Mattis will take care of it.

....

If North Korea keeps on with this reckless behavior, if the United States has to defend itself or defend its allies in any way, North Korea will be destroyed. And we all know that, and none of us want that.

....

We have pretty much exhausted all the things that we could do at the Security Council at this point.

"Nikki Haley: Trump's fire and fury comment 'not an empty threat'," [CNN](#), 19:10 EDT, 17 Sep 2017.

China has urged the United States to refrain from making threats to North Korea. Asked about President Donald Trump's warning last month that the North Korean threat to the United States will be met with "fire and fury," Haley said, "It was not an empty threat."

"U.S. Ambassador Haley — U.N. has exhausted options on North Korea," [Reuters](#), 17 Sep 2017.

See also [Washington Post](#) article titled: "U.S. warns that time is running out for peaceful solution with North Korea".

On 18 September, the U.S. flew four F-35 stealth fighter jets and two B-1 bombers over South Korea in a military exercise with the South Korean air force. [Pentagon](#); [Yonhap](#); [Washington Post](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The display of U.S. Military superior airpower underscored Nikki Haley's threat yesterday to evaporate North Korea.

On 19 September 2017, Trump gave a horrible speech at the United Nations General Assembly in which he again threatened North Korea. Here is what Trump said about North Korea:

The scourge of our planet today is a small group of rogue regimes that violate every

principle on which the United Nations is based. They respect neither their own citizens nor the sovereign rights of their countries.

If the righteous many do not confront the wicked few, then evil will triumph. When decent people and nations become bystanders to history, the forces of destruction only gather power and strength.

No one has shown more contempt for other nations and for the well being of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea. It is responsible for the starvation deaths of millions of North Koreans, and for the imprisonment, torture, killing, and oppression of countless more.

We were all witness to the regime's deadly abuse when an innocent American college student, Otto Warmbier, was returned to America only to die a few days later. We saw it in the assassination of the dictator's brother using banned nerve agents in an international airport. We know it kidnapped a sweet 13-year-old Japanese girl from a beach in her own country to enslave her as a language tutor for North Korea's spies.

If this is not twisted enough, now North Korea's reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatens the entire world with unthinkable loss of human life.

It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with such a regime, but would arm, supply, and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict. No nation on earth has an interest in seeing this band of criminals arm itself with nuclear weapons and missiles.

The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime. The United States is ready, willing and able, but hopefully this will not be necessary. That's what the United Nations is all about; that's what the United Nations is for. Let's see how they do.

It is time for North Korea to realize that the denuclearization is its only acceptable future. The United Nations Security Council recently held two unanimous 15-0 votes adopting hard-hitting resolutions against North Korea, and I want to thank China and Russia for joining the vote to impose sanctions, along with all of the other members of the Security Council. Thank you to all involved.

But we must do much more. It is time for all nations to work together to isolate the Kim regime until it ceases its hostile behavior.

....

Earlier in his speech, Trump explained:

We do not expect diverse countries to share the same cultures, traditions, or even systems of government. But we do expect all nations to uphold these two core sovereign duties: to respect the interests of their own people and the rights of every other sovereign nation. This is the beautiful vision of this institution, and this is

foundation for cooperation and success.

Strong, sovereign nations let diverse countries with different values, different cultures, and different dreams not just coexist, but work side by side on the basis of mutual respect.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump to the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly," [White House](#), 19 Sep 2017.

I am aghast that Trump would call Kim Jong Un "Rocket Man" in a formal speech at an international meeting. Trump explicitly said "if [the USA] is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea." Yes, evaporate Pyongyang with a freedom-loving 10-megaton nuclear weapon. Trump said "It is an outrage that some nations would not only trade with [North Korea], but would arm, supply, and financially support a country that imperils the world with nuclear conflict." Trump needs to be reminded that the USA *gave* billions of dollars of food and fuel oil to North Korea, which made North Korea stronger.

Trump created his foreign policy around respect for sovereignty. But then Trump arrogantly declared that some rogue nations (e.g., North Korea, Iran, "the criminal regime of Bashar al-Assad" in Syria, Venezuela) are unworthy of our respect for their sovereignty. Trump said "We must reject threats to sovereignty, from the Ukraine to the South China Sea." But Trump failed to explicitly mention that Russia and communist China are those rogue nations who have annexed Crimea and annexed islands in the South China Sea. Apparently, nations that have a veto on the United Nations Security Council — and who use that veto to protect Assad in Syria and to protect North Korea — are immune from being identified as rogue nations. In my opinion, rogue nations should be identified by international consensus, and *not* by one arrogant nation that is self-appointed to identify Evil.

Trump's speech is also remarkable for what it did *not* say. The words "negotiation" and "talk" appear nowhere in his speech, despite those words being essential to diplomats at the United Nations. In the context of an agreement with Iran, Trump declared: "we cannot abide by an agreement if it provides cover for the eventual construction of a nuclear program," which means the USA will *not* necessarily honor its past agreements with other nations. (Incidentally, it is well known that Trump withdrew the USA from the Paris climate accord, Trump is currently renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement, and Trump has threatened to renegotiate the Free Trade Agreement with South Korea.) Trump wants North Korea to obey United Nations Resolutions, but Trump's administration is failing to meet its obligations under the same United Nations Resolutions to engage North Korea in six-party talks without preconditions. See, e.g., Resolution 2375 at §28 ("Reaffirms its support for the Six Party Talks, calls for their resumption,"); Resolution 2371 at §27; Resolution 2321 at §47; etc. Instead, Trump's administration demands that North Korea indicate its willingness to abandon all of its nuclear weapons, *before* the U.S. Government will negotiate with North Korea.

The Guardian newspaper in England reported that the North Korean foreign minister made the first official North Korean reaction to Trump's speech:

Speaking to reporters outside his hotel after arriving in New York on Wednesday [20 Sep], Ri cited a Korean proverb when asked to respond to Trump's vow to destroy

his country.

“There is a saying that the marching goes on even when dogs bark,” Ri said, according to South Korea’s Yonhap news agency.

“If he was thinking he could scare us with the sound of a dog barking, that’s really a dog dream,” he added. In Korean, a dog dream is one that makes little sense.

Asked what he thought of Trump’s description of Kim as rocket man, Ri replied: “I feel sorry for his aides.”

Justin McCurry, “‘Sound of a dog barking’: North Korea ridicules Trump threat,” [The Guardian](#), 23:36 EDT, 20 Sep 2017.

The North Korean foreign minister's reaction is also reported by: [Yonhap](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Trump's childish threats and mocking "Rocket Man" did *not* move us closer to solving the North Korean problem.

On 21 September 2017, [Reuters](#) reported that China's Central Bank on 18 September had ordered banks in China to stop doing business with North Korea. The order specifically forbids loans to North Korean companies. Trump responded to this Reuters report by saying: "... I want to just say, and thank President Xi of China for the very bold move he made today. That was a somewhat unexpected move and we appreciate it." [White House](#).

Back on 12 September, [Reuters](#) reported that China's four largest state-owned banks had stopped doing business with North Korean companies. Reuters reported: "The measures taken by the largest Chinese banks began as early as the end of last year, when the Dandong city branch of China’s most international lender, Bank of China Ltd (BoC), stopped allowing North Koreans to open individual or business accounts, said a BoC bank teller who declined to be identified. Existing North Korean account holders could not deposit or remove money from their accounts, the BoC bank teller said."

On 21 September 2017, Trump announced [Executive Order 13810](#) that imposed economic sanctions on people and companies that do business with North Korea. See Trump's [letter](#) to Congress that explains his Executive Order. [White House](#)(Trump's remarks); [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#).

Later on 21 September in the USA (22 Sep in Korea), Kim Jong Un — who Trump derisively called "Rocket Man" — said: “I will surely and definitely tame the mentally deranged U.S. dotard [Trump] with fire.” [Yonhap](#); [Reuters](#); [New York Times](#); [Washington Post](#).

The personal statement by Kim in the previous paragraph is unprecedented, in that the leader of North Korea normally lets his propaganda ministry speak for him. [Associated Press](#); [New York Times](#) article cited in previous paragraph; [Reuters](#)("South Korea said it was the first direct statement of its kind by a North Korean leader."); [The Guardian](#).

Clearly, the North Korean problem now includes a *personal* dispute between Trump and Kim. Trump and Kim are both angry, impulsive men. Both of them are refusing to negotiate a solution to this crisis. I worry which one will launch a preemptive military strike first.

Trump's belligerent speech on 19 September made the North Korean problem worse by adding reasons for Kim to seek nuclear weapons and ICBMs, to deter aggression by the U.S. warmongers. In his 21 Sep reply, Kim said: "[Trump's] remarks ... have convinced me, rather than frightening or stopping me, that the path I chose is correct and that it is the one I have to follow to the last."

The [Associated Press](#) published the full text of Kim's criticism of Trump's speech. Also at: [New York Times](#); [Voice of America](#); [The Independent](#); [Korea Herald](#); [Korea Times](#).

Then Yonhap reported a statement by the North Korean foreign minister:

North Korea may conduct the most powerful test of a hydrogen bomb in the Pacific Ocean in its possible "highest-level" actions against the United States, the North's top diplomat said Thursday [21 Sep].

Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho made the comment after North Korean leader Kim Jong-un said that he is considering the strongest actions in response to U.S. President Donald Trump's threat to "totally destroy" the country.

"It could be the most powerful detonation of an H-bomb in the Pacific," Ri told reporters. "We have no idea about what actions could be taken as it will be ordered by leader Kim Jong-un."

"N.K. FM says 'highest-level' actions in Kim's remarks may be H-bomb test in Pacific," [Yonhap](#), 09:57 Korean time, 22 Sep 2017.

Detonation of a hydrogen-bomb in the Pacific Ocean would produce a large amount of radioactive sodium and radioactive chlorine from salt in seawater. These two radioactive elements could enter human's food chain through fish and become an environmental disaster. A nuclear test in the atmosphere (as opposed to underground) would release large amounts of radioactive fallout into the atmosphere, which is why tests of nuclear weapons in the atmosphere were banned by an international treaty in 1963. A test of a nuclear weapon in the Pacific Ocean would add a new dimension to North Korea's tests of weapons forbidden by multiple United Nations Security Council Resolutions.

On Friday morning, 22 September, Trump tweeted:

Kim Jong Un of North Korea, who is obviously a madman who doesn't mind starving or killing his people, will be tested like never before!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 06:28 EDT, 22 Sep 2017.

On Friday evening, 22 September, Trump gave a campaign speech in Huntsville, Alabama for Luther Strange, a Republican running for U.S. Senate. Perhaps because Trump repeatedly departed from his prepared text, I can not find a transcript of what Trump said. The following quotation from Trump's speech is from *The Telegraph* in England:

We have some really, really bad people and we are going to take care of the bad people. It's about time.

Little Rocketman should have been handled a long time ago, by [Bill] Clinton — I won't mention the Republicans — by Obama.

We can't have that madman out there shooting rockets all over the place.

He is talking about massive weapons exploding all over the Pacific Ocean which causes a terrific calamity where the plume goes.

Maybe something gets worked out, maybe it doesn't, personally I am not sure it will.

But I will tell you something, you are protected. Nobody is going to mess with our people, nobody is going to play games, nobody is going to put our people in that kind of danger."

He may be smart, he may be totally strategic, he may be crazy, but we are going to handle it, folks."

David Millward, "Donald Trump promises Americans will be protected from 'little Rocketman' Kim Jong-un," [The Telegraph](#), 21:34 EDT, 22 Sep 2017.

See also [The Hill](#); [Washington Post](#)(22Sep); [Washington Post](#)(23Sep).

My comment is that Trump's audience in Alabama is "protected" from North Korea by the long distance and by the fact there are more important targets in the USA. But Seoul could be destroyed in any war with North Korea. Trump says nothing about protecting Seoul.

Also notice Trump's childish remark about "bad people". An educated adult would be expected to use a more precise, more erudite, expression.

My comment is that lost in the insults and rhetoric is the fact that Trump has *not* proposed a viable solution for the North Korean problem. And Trump's belligerent remarks has reinforced Kim's zeal to develop nuclear weapons and ICBMs, to deter Trump's aggression.

On 23 September 2017, the U.S. Air Force flew B-1 bombers from Guam and F-15 fighters from Japan to international waters on the eastern coast of North Korea, in another display of U.S. Military might to frighten Kim. A Pentagon spokesperson said: "This is the farthest north of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) any U.S. fighter or bomber aircraft have flown off North Korea's coast in the 21st century, underscoring the seriousness with which we take [North Korea's] reckless behavior." [Pentagon](#); [Yonhap](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On the morning of 23 September, the North Korean foreign minister, Ri Yong Ho, gave a speech to the United Nations General Assembly that responded to Trump's recent threats and insults. Ri's speech is important in that he clearly explained the reasons why North Korea has developed nuclear weapons, and why North Korea will *not* abandon its nuclear weapons.

Here is part of what Ri said:

Before going into the main points in my debate, I feel forced to make comments on the speech uttered 4 days ago by someone called the U.S. president that rendered this sacred UN arena tainted.

Since Trump uttered such reckless and violent words provoking the supreme dignity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) at this very platform, I think it is fair enough for me to make a response in the corresponding tone.

During his 8 months in power, he has turned the White House into a noisy marketing place full of crackling sounds of abacus beads and now he has tried to turn the UN arena into a gangsters' nest where money is respected and bloodshed is the order of the day.

The absurd reality that the person like Trump, a mentally deranged person full of megalomania and complacency, the person who is chastised even by American people as "Commander in Grief, "Lyin King", "President Evil" is holding the seat of the U.S. President, and the dangerous reality that the gambler who grew old using threats, frauds and all other schemes to acquire a patch of land holds the nuclear button; these are what constitute the gravest threat to the international peace and security today.

Due to his lacking of basic common knowledge and proper sentiment, he tried to insult the supreme dignity of my country by referring it to a rocket. By doing so, however, he committed an irreversible mistake of making our rockets' visit to the entire U.S. mainland inevitable all the more.

None other than Trump himself is on a suicide mission.

....

The United States is the country that first produced nuclear weapons and the only country that actually used it, massacring hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians.

It is the U.S. that threatened to use nuclear weapon against the DPRK during the Korean War in 1950s and first introduced nuclear weapons into the Korean peninsula after the war.

The U.S. started large-scale joint military exercises against the DPRK during the Cold War period and further increased their scope and aggressive nature after the Cold War, staging the exercises several times a year by mobilizing more of nuclear strategic assets.

What else could be a bigger threat than the violent remarks such as pouring "fire and fury", "total destruction" coming from the top authority of the world's biggest nuclear power.

The very reason the DPRK had to possess nuclear weapons is because of the U.S. and it had to strengthen and develop its nuclear force onto the current level to cope with the U.S.

....

Although our decision to possess nuclear weapons was an inevitable option forced by the United States, it resulted in our country achieving the status of a nuclear weapon state and a rocket power, and this prestige has now become an immortal destiny of the DPRK.

....

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a responsible nuclear weapon state.

We will take preventive measures by merciless preemptive action in case the U.S. and its vassal forces show any sign of conducting a kind of "decapitating" operation on our headquarters or military attack against our country. However, we do not have any intention at all to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against the countries that do not join in the U.S. military actions against the DPRK.

....

Through such a prolonged and arduous struggle, now we are finally only a few steps away from the final gate of completion of the state nuclear force. It is only a forlorn hope to consider any chance that the DPRK would be shaken an inch or change its stance due to the harsher sanctions by the hostile forces.

The day will certainly come in near future when we settle all damages inflicted to our peaceful economic development and improvement of the people's livelihood and all the sufferings imposed on our innocent women, children and elderly by the heinous and barbaric sanctions against our Republic.

"Statement by H.E. Mr. RI YONG HO, Minister for Foreign Affairs, of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," [U.N. General Assembly](#), 23 Sep 2017.

Journalists reported on Ri's speech: [Associated Press](#); [Washington Post](#); [Reuters](#).

My comments:

Ri's name has the prefix "H.E.", which customarily stands for "his excellency", but in Ri's case stands for "high explosive". <grin>

Ri asserts "[Trump] has turned the White House into a noisy marketing place full of crackling sounds of abacus beads". I am pretty sure that Trump neither owns nor uses abacus beads. Trump probably uses an electronic calculator, which have been common in the USA since the 1970s.

Trump is *not* Evil. When I think of Trump as president, the word "unfit" comes to mind. As do the words "incompetent", "inexperienced", "amateurish", "inconsistent", and "ineffective".

Ri said "[Trump] tried to insult the supreme dignity of my country by referring it to a rocket." That is wrong. Trump personally insulted Kim, the current leader of North Korea, by calling Kim "Rocket Man" — or more recently "Little Rocket Man" — but Trump did *not* insult the nation of North Korea.

In a late night tweet on the day of Ri's speech to the General Assembly, Trump replied:
Just heard Foreign Minister of North Korea speak at U.N. If he echoes thoughts of
Little Rocket Man, they won't be around much longer!
Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 23:08 EDT, 23 Sep 2017.

Once again, Trump is making a bad situation worse by continuing the insults, invective, and threats. If Trump has any effect, it will be to push North Korea and the USA closer to war. Trump is *not* pursuing a solution to the North Korean problem, but he is doing a good job at childish insults.

On 24 September, North Korea released fictitious photographs of North Korean missiles destroying the U.S.S. Vinson aircraft carrier and shooting down U.S. Air Force bombers. These propaganda photographs were posted at a North Korean government website. [Yonhap](#); [Washington Post](#); [The Telegraph](#). My comment is that this North Korean propaganda has the status of a cheap cartoon. The North Koreans should have called Trump "Mr. Tweet".

On 24 September, the [Washington Post](#) reported that China is frustrated, as the North Korea problem worsens, and China really does have limited influence over the North Korean government's policies. *The Post* said: "Unwilling to completely pull the plug [from North Korea], [China] has nevertheless agreed to a stiff package of sanctions at the United Nations and implemented them with unprecedented determination, experts say. So far, all that has achieved is to alienate its neighbor and erstwhile friend. But China is not prepared to do anything that might bring down the North Korean regime, potentially bringing refugees streaming across its border and unifying the Korean Peninsula under a U.S.-friendly government." On 25 September, [Yonhap](#) reported that the most recent high-level contact between the Chinese and North Korean governments was on June 2013.

On 25 September 2017, the hysterical foreign minister Ri declared that Trump's tweet on 23 Sep was a "a declaration of war" by the USA. Ri also declared that North Korea would shoot down U.S. bombers that flew over international waters near North Korea. [Yonhap](#); [Associated Press](#); [New York Times](#); [Reuters](#).

My comment is that Ri's speech on 23 Sep actually said that Trump's "Rocket Man" insult made it "inevitable" that North Korea would launch missiles at the U.S. mainland, which is essentially a declaration of war by North Korea. *If* North Korea can shoot at U.S. bombers flying over international waters, then Ri's logic would seem to also allow North Korea to shoot at U.S. Navy ships in international waters near North Korea.

Is Ri's threat to shoot down U.S. bombers that fly over international waters another empty threats from North Korea? On 26 September, [Yonhap](#) reported that North Korea was "readjusting the position of its warplanes and strengthening its coastal defenses". Further, [Yonhap](#) tersely suggested that North Korea may not have been aware of the B-1 bombers' flight on 23 Sep until *after* the Pentagon's public announcement, perhaps because North Korea "was unable to keep its radar system fully operational due to an electricity shortage". [Reuters](#) reported a U.S. reconnaissance satellite "detected a small number of North Korean military aircraft moving to the North [Korea]'s east coast." See also: [Korea Times](#);

[Korea Herald.](#)

On 26 September 2017, Trump spoke to journalists at the White House and said the following about North Korea:

It is time for all responsible nations to join forces to isolate the North Korean menace. North Korean nuclear weapons and missile development threaten the entire world with unthinkable loss of life. All nations must act now to ensure the regime's complete denuclearization.

I appreciate the United Nations Security Council voting twice, unanimously — 15 to nothing, twice — to adopt hard-hitting resolutions against North Korea. I have recently issued tough new sanctions against those who do business with this outlaw regime, and I applaud China's latest action to restrict its trade with North Korea. And, in particular, I applaud China for breaking off all banking relationships with North Korea — something that people would have thought unthinkable even two months ago. I want to thank President Xi.

....

QUESTION: And on North Korea, very quickly, the [North Korean] Foreign Minister said you have declared, effectively, war on North Korea. And the North Korean government has threatened to shoot down or aim at American planes flying in international airspace. I would like your reaction to that.

PRESIDENT TRUMP: Okay, well, I'll answer the second [question] first. We're totally prepared for the second option; not a preferred option. But if we take that option, it will be devastating — I can tell you that — devastating for North Korea. That's called the military option. If we have to take it, we will.

He's acting very badly. He's saying things that should never, ever be said. And we're replying to those things, but it's a reply. It's not an original statement; it's a reply. But the things that he said over the last year — and if you look back, the things that he said to past administrations — North Korea is a situation that should have been handled 25 years ago, 20 years ago, 15 years ago, 10 years ago, and five years ago, and it could have been handled much more easily.

You had various administrations — many administrations which left me a mess. But I'll fix the mess. So we'll see what happens with North Korea.

Donald J. Trump, "Remarks by President Trump and President Rajoy of the Government of Spain in Joint Press Conference," [White House](#), 26 Sep 2017.

My comment is that Trump is rambling. Trump says the "second option" is the "military option", but Trump did not say what is the first option. Presumably, negotiations are the first option. Trump says Kim is "saying things that should never, ever be said." Trump's criticism of Kim also applies to Trump, who has engaged in a long series of belligerent threats to North Korea. Finally, Trump blames the North Korean problem on previous administrations (e.g., Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, Obama) who left a "mess". While Trump is correct about his three predecessors, Trump has been president for eight months

without announcing a consistent plan for solving the North Korea problem. And the real blame for this mess should be on the North Korean government, who has violated a long series of United Nations Resolutions and who has refused to negotiate. Trump's belligerent threats have made the problem worse, by accelerating the development of North Korean weapons. Further, Trump's preconditions for negotiations have made negotiations unacceptable to North Korea.

On 28 September 2017, China ordered businesses in China that are owned by North Korea to close before 11 Jan 2018. [Yonhap](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

On 28 September 2017, there was a burst of honesty in the U.S. Senate Banking Committee, in which it was admitted that North Korea was *not* going to abandon its nuclear weapons.

The Associated Press reported:

A senior State Department official acknowledged Thursday [28 Sep] that U.S. intelligence agencies don't believe North Korea will ever pull the plug on its nuclear program, raising concerns among lawmakers over the Trump administration's strategy for bringing a mounting crisis to a peaceful close.

Susan Thornton, the acting assistant secretary of state for East Asia and the Pacific, said her department and other federal agencies are "testing" the conclusion reached by the intelligence agencies. The administration, she told members of the Senate Banking Committee, is ratcheting up "international isolation and pressure" on North Korea, with essential help from China, which she called Pyongyang's "leading enabler."

Sen. Bob Corker, R-Tenn., said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un views nuclear weapons as "his ticket to survival" and there's virtually nothing to make him turn back. Corker, who also chairs the Foreign Relations Committee, asked Thornton and Sigal Mandelker, the undersecretary of Treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence, what steps could quickly steer North Korea from being able to fire missiles at the United States.

"We're trying to turn China's position from looking at North Korea as some kind of asset, to looking at them as a liability," Thornton said. "I think that (Secretary of State Rex) Tillerson has made a lot of progress on that front."

But Corker said that while he applauded Tillerson's efforts, the secretary is "working against the unified view of our intelligence agencies."

Echoing Corker's concerns, Sen. Mark Warner, D-Va., said "there may be a contradiction between the conclusions of the intelligence community and what the secretary of state is trying to do."

Richard Lardner, "Senators question strategy for halting NKorea's nuke program," [Associated Press](#), 28 Sep 2017.

Above in this essay, I quoted James Clapper (26 June 2017) that the North Koreans will *not* abandon their nuclear weapons. Senators Corker and Warner note the U.S. Intelligence community says the North Koreans will *not* abandon their nuclear weapons. But the U.S. State Department is pursuing a delusion that economic sanctions will force the North Koreans

to abandon their nuclear weapons. See [above](#).

Given that we must solve the North Korean problem in the next few months, we do not have the luxury of allowing the U.S. State Department to pursue a delusion, while the North Koreans develop an ICBM that can carry a nuclear warhead to the U.S. mainland.

On 30 September 2017, Tillerson told journalists that the U.S. Government has three direct channels of communication to the North Korean government. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#); [New York Times](#). Unfortunately, Tillerson wants to talk about the North Koreans abandoning their nuclear weapons program, and destroying their entire stockpile of nuclear weapons — a topic that is unacceptable to the North Koreans. As explained [above](#), this U.S. policy is a recipe for failure.

October 2017: Continuing North Korean Problem

On Sunday, 1 October 2017, Trump fired off two tweets about North Korea.

I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man...

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 10:30 EDT, 1 Oct 2017.

...Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 10:31 EDT, 1 Oct 2017.

Four or five hours later on 1 Oct, Trump tweeted:

Being nice to Rocket Man hasn't worked in 25 years, why would it work now? Clinton failed, Bush failed, and Obama failed. I won't fail.

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 15:01 EDT, 1 Oct 2017.

See reports by journalists, e.g., [Politico](#); [New York Times](#); [Washington Post](#); [Los Angeles Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

Tillerson is wasting his time, because Tillerson is intransigently demanding that the North Koreans abandon their nuclear program. As explained [above](#), the North Koreans want to keep their existing nuclear weapons. But if Tillerson were to invite the North Koreans to negotiations without any pre-conditions, then maybe negotiations could solve the North Korean problem. [Above](#), I sketch a Chinese proposal that might be acceptable to North Korea.

Moving beyond the substance of Trump's two tweets, Trump again insulted Kim by derisively calling him "Little Rocket Man". And Trump publicly undercut his own Secretary of State by saying Tillerson was "wasting his time". Since Trump gave his horrible speech at the United Nations General Assembly on 19 September 2017, Trump seems to emphasize a military solution to the North Korean problem. Trump's belligerent threats surely convince the North Koreans that they need nuclear weapons to deter aggression by the USA.

Moreover, with Trump advocating a military solution and Tillerson advocating diplomacy, U.S. policy is inconsistent and incoherent — a strong indication of the inexperienced and amateurish people like Trump and Tillerson.

Responding to his afternoon tweet, "Rocket Man" (Kim Jong Un) has been the leader of North Korea since December 2011, 6 years ago, *not* 25 years ago. Trump should have said "being nice to North Korea hasn't worked in 25 years". Perhaps the reason "being nice" failed was that the U.S. did not give North Korea what it really wanted: recognition as a sovereign nation with nuclear weapons.

Trump has already failed to prevent North Korea from developing an ICBM and failed to prevent North Korea from developing a hydrogen-bomb. Trump has also failed to convince North Korea to negotiate a solution to the problem. I fear that soon I will say "Trump has failed to prevent war with North Korea."

On 2 October 2017, the [Associated Press](#) tersely noted: "The North professes to not even be interested in diplomacy unless the U.S. abandons its 'hostile policy'." "Hostile policy" includes U.S. Military exercises in South Korea.

On 2 October 2017, the White House press spokesperson stated that the U.S. Government would *not* negotiate with North Korea about nuclear weapons "at this time".

QUESTION: Sarah, thank you. Following up on the tweets about the DPRK over the weekend, the President tweeted, "Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done!" So is it the stated position of the White House that you're trying to get back to talks? Or have you given up?

MS. SANDERS: No, this is — we've been clear that now is not the time to talk. The only conversations that have taken place, or that would, would be on bringing back Americans who have been detained. Like with Otto, those were the type of conversations that this administration was willing to have. Beyond that, there will be no conversations with North Korea at this time.

....

MS. SANDERS: There are three Americans still detained in North Korea. That would be the only reason for us to have conversations with them at this time.

QUESTION: Sarah, can I follow on that? I also want to ask about today. But does the President believe diplomacy then is not worth pursuing in North Korea?

MS. SANDERS: There's a difference between talking and putting diplomatic pressure. We still strongly support putting diplomatic pressure on North Korea, which we're continuing to do. But now is not the time simply to have conversations with North Korea.

We've encouraged all of our allies and partners to do more, and we're going to continue to keep all options on the table when it comes to that.

Sarah Huckabee Sanders, "Press Briefing by Press Secretary Sarah Sanders, 10/2/2017, #18"

[White House](#), 2 October 2017.

So the U.S. Government continues to violate United Nations Security Council Resolutions that call for resumption of six-party talks with North Korea.

On 5 October 2017, the [Washington Post](#) reported that Trump will next week "decertify" the agreement on Iran's development of nuclear weapons, not because Iran violated the agreement, but because Trump believes the agreement "is not in the national interest of the United States". I mention the Iran agreement here, because North Korea will see Trump's decision as an indication that the USA does *not* honor its agreements. Previously, Trump withdrew the USA from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris accord on climate change. Does Trump *understand* what he is doing? Of course, not. Which is why I am writing this essay to chronicle Trump's amateurish and incompetent decisions.

On the evening of 5 October 2017, Trump hosted a dinner at the White House for senior U.S. Military leaders. Speaking to journalists, Trump ominously told them: "You guys know what this represents? Maybe it's the calm before the storm." When asked to clarify, Trump cryptically replied: "You'll find out." Trump was apparently referring to Iran or North Korea. [The Guardian](#); [Politico](#); [Washington Post](#); [New York Times](#); [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#).

At the [White House](#) press briefing on 6 October, Trump's spokesperson refused to clarify what Trump meant by "storm".

My comment is that Trump may have intended to sound like a television announcer who says "tune again next week for the next thrill-packed episode of Mr. Tweet Goes to Washington". But leaders in Iran and North Korea may misinterpret Trump's remarks.

On Saturday, 7 October 2017, Trump fired off two more tweets:

Presidents and their administrations have been talking to North Korea for 25 years, agreements made and massive amounts of money paid.....

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 15:40 EDT, 7 October 2017.

...hasn't worked, agreements violated before the ink was dry, makings fools of U.S. negotiators. Sorry, but only one thing will work!

Donald J. Trump, [tweet](#), 15:45 EDT, 7 October 2017.

The second tweet on 7 October is similar to Trump's 1 Oct tweets that said:

"I told Rex Tillerson, our wonderful Secretary of State, that he is wasting his time trying to negotiate with Little Rocket Man. Save your energy Rex, we'll do what has to be done! Being nice to Rocket Man hasn't worked in 25 years, why would it work now? Clinton failed, Bush failed, and Obama failed. I won't fail."

Donald J. Trump, Three tweets, citations above.

On 1 October, Trump plainly says negotiations are a "waste of time" and have failed during the past 25 years. On 7 October, Trump again criticized negotiations with North Korea and ominously declared: "only one thing will work!" Trump's meaning is clear: he is now focusing on a military solution to the North Korean problem. Trump's tweets on 1 and 7 October are consistent with what Tillerson said (quoted [above](#)) in March 2017, before Tillerson became committed to negotiations to denuclearize North Korea.

Above, I explained why a pre-emptive military strike on North Korea was *not* a viable option. Additionally, Trump — and others at high levels of the U.S. Government — have been threatening a military strike on North Korea since mid-March 2017, which has given the North Koreans more than a half-year to prepare for a U.S. attack.

Conclusion

I have a number of conclusions about Trump and the North Korean problem:

1. As suggested above, Trump did *not* appreciate the seriousness of the North Korean problem before 2017.
2. From the time that Trump became president on 20 Jan 2017 until 15 March 2017, Trump's administration appears to have done nothing about North Korea.
3. From 16 March 2017 until 1 May 2017, Trump's administration had a burst of belligerent threats of military action against North Korea. These belligerent threats caused North Korea to accelerate its ballistic missile tests from an average of one/month to three/month.

But on 14 April 2017, anonymous White House staffers told journalists that Trump would pursue a policy of "maximum pressure and engagement", to encourage negotiations — exposing the belligerent threats as a bluff.

On 26 April 2017, the U.S. Government declared that North Korea was now Trump's "top foreign-policy priority".

4. From 2 May 2017 until 28 June 2017, Trump appears to have again ignored North Korea.
5. North Korea's ICBM tests on 3 July and 28 July 2017 got the attention of the Trump administration. The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations negotiated another worthless United Nations Security Council Resolution, which was passed on 5 August 2017.
6. On 25-27 July 2017, the U.S. Military warned that time was running out to solve the North Korean problem.
7. On 8-11 August 2017, there were more inflammatory and belligerent remarks by Trump.
8. On 29 August 2017, North Korea launched an intermediate-range ballistic missile that flew over Japan. The United Nations Security Council issued a worthless Presidential Statement on the same day.

9. On 30 August 2017, there were more inflammatory and belligerent remarks by Trump, in which he said talking with North Korea "is not the answer!".
10. On 3 September 2017, North Korea conducted their sixth test of a nuclear weapon, which may have been a small hydrogen-bomb. The U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations negotiated another worthless United Nations Security Council Resolution, which was passed on 11 September 2017.
11. On 5 September 2017, a United Nations committee of experts issued a report that said North Korea was [evading](#) sanctions. That evasion makes the United Nations' economic sanctions worthless.
12. On 19 September 2017, Trump gave a horrible speech to the United Nations General Assembly that threatened "to totally destroy North Korea." Trump's speech began a six-day exchange of threats and insults between North Korea and Trump.
- 13.

As mentioned [above](#), Trump's policy or strategy on North Korea bounced inconsistently amongst at least six different directions, showing that the Trump administration is a bunch of amateurs who are making the North Korean problem worse. In particular, Trump's belligerent threats caused Kim to accelerate the development of nuclear weapons and ICBMs.

The U.S. State Department (e.g., Tillerson and Nikki Haley) — and sometimes also Trump himself — piously say they hope to avoid war with North Korea. But then they hypocritically demand pre-conditions on any possible future negotiations with North Korea — conditions that guarantee there will be *no* negotiations with North Korea, leaving war as the only option.

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