

Kim Jong-un: We'll Nuke the U.S.

President Donald Trump's tough line on North Korea's continued development of a nuclear weapons program and ballistic missiles that can reach the U.S. elicited an equally defiant response from the "Hermit Kingdom's" leader.

In a public statement released after Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told reporters in South Korea that a "preemptive" strike against North Korea remains "on the table," the North's third-generation communist dictator, Kim Jong-un, was reported to have said:

"The Korean People's Army will reduce the bases of aggression and provocation to ashes with its invincible Hwasong rockets tipped with nuclear warheads and reliably defend the security of the country and its people's happiness in case the U.S. and the South Korean puppet forces fire even a single bullet at the territory of the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea—also known as North Korea]."

Since President Bill Clinton's administration attempted to conduct direct talks with North Korea in the 1990s, the Kim regime has conducted five successful nuclear test detonations. It also has conducted dozens of ballistic missile tests, although experts have been unable to conclude whether or not it possesses intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of reaching the continental U.S.

The war between North Korea and United Nations forces ended in 1953 with a cease-fire agreement, not an actual peace accord, meaning the two sides are still technically at war with each other. Trump's policies have appeared so far to be aimed at putting regional pressure on China, which largely props up the North's government, to rein in Kim.

A recent missile test conducted by North Korea was condemned by China, as well as the U.S. and its allies, Japan and South Korea. But at meetings in China over the weekend, the emphasis from Tillerson's counterparts was on a "cool-headed" approach to the Kim regime. {eoa}