

Red Line Crossed: What Will President Trump Do With North Korea?

North Korea has crossed its first “red line” with President Donald Trump, who had vowed the Hermit Kingdom would never test an intercontinental ballistic missile.

The test launch occurred late Monday evening, which was already Tuesday morning in North Korea, in what the nation’s dictator, Kim Jong-un, announced was a “package of gifts” for the U.S. The Korean Central News Agency, the Hermit Kingdom’s state-run news organization, declared the ICBM is nuclear capable:

The DPRK succeeded in the test-launch of intercontinental ballistic rocket Hwasong-14, a great event noteworthy in the history of building a nuclear power of Juche. Upon receiving the news, all the people of the country are extending warm congratulations to the scientists and technicians of the Academy of Defense Science.

“The success in the test-launch of intercontinental ballistic rocket at one go-off is just a victory of the Workers’ Party of Korea’s line of simultaneously pushing forward economic construction and the building of nuclear force and an auspicious event like lifting up the earth at one try,” said Ri Sun Chol, a department head of Kim Chaek University of Technology, when interviewed by KCNA in front of a large electronic display at Pyongyang Railway Station.

He added:

This showed once again the world people that nonsensical is sophism that the DPRK has no longer a future unless it “changes its line” and “abandons nuclear program.”

The historic deeds which are taking place one after another in the field of defense science of the DPRK despite the imperialists' persistent sanctions and pressure are the shinning victory which clearly showed once again that no one on earth can match the might of the army and people of the DPRK aspiring after independence and justice.

Those in the field of defense science of the DPRK will send the U.S. and its followers more "gift packages" as they are steeped in gangster-like logic unconditionally denying any ballistic rocket or satellite of the DPRK. Thunder of the DPRK defending justice will more loudly resound forth over the world.

I extend once again my warm congratulations to the scientists and technicians of the Academy of Defense Science, who have displayed the might of the best powerful [sic] country.

According to U.S. officials, the ICBM flew for approximately 40 minutes before splashing down in the Sea of Japan. It reached an altitude of more than 1,500 miles, giving it an estimated range of more than 4,100 miles. With that range, it can strike any U.S. facility in the Pacific Ocean, Hawaii and Alaska.

President Donald Trump quickly responded to the launch via Twitter:

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

Tuesday, the State Department issued this statement attributed to Secretary of State Rex Tillerson:

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 U.N. 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 U.N. 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.

U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Nikki Haley was expected to push for a new round of sanctions Wednesday at the U.N. Security Council. But it's clear that other options are on the table as well.

Army Lt. Gen. Jerry Boykin (ret.), executive vice president of the Family Research Council, laid out some of those options Tuesday evening in a statement he posted on his official Facebook page:

The North Korean missile test today brings the U.S. and its allies one step closer to war in the Pacific rim.

I am still hopeful that war can be averted, but this missile test demonstrated the potential for North Korea to reach the U.S., particularly Alaska. The question for

President Trump is how long he is willing to wait before taking decisive action against Kim Jon-un and his rogue regime.

Can American afford to take the risk that North Korea will come to their senses and stop this insane game of chicken? I think not.

America must act now and be relentless in stopping Kim from having capability to use a nuke against the U.S. or our allies in Asia. So what are our options for stopping him? There are no good options. Here are my thoughts:

1. Prepare a military plan that completely destroys the NK nuclear program. This would be a devastating and extensive operation that would last for days. It would target all known underground facilities where nukes are built, stored or assembled. It would also target missile storage and launch sites. Establish a Naval Blockade of NK and stop all shipping from entering or exiting the country. That is an act of war. And finally, target the NK artillery on the DMZ to reduce the amount of destruction by that artillery of Seoul, which would be significant.

Note: I hope that the military option is the last resort, but we need to recognize the seriousness of this threat.

2. Execute a covert action against Kim and the regime. This should include cyber attacks and a possible killing of Kim. That would be very difficult given his security and paranoia. Furthermore, the U.S. should try to create an insurgency in NK to possibly overthrow Kim or at least to grab his attention and distract him from his nuclear ambitions. Covert action could also include the use of technology to destroy NK infrastructure.

3. Sanction NK and every country or corporation that does any business with NK. Done correctly, this could bring the NK economy to a halt. It would include all banks,

industries, nations and individuals who are trading with or doing business with Kim and his regime.

4. Pressure the Chinese to take action including killing Kim, sanctioning NK, using their own covert capabilities or simply giving him an ultimatum which, if ignored, would lead to a Chinese and U.S. combined blockade of the entire nation. That one might be a stretch, but we need to think big right now.

Other analysts are predicting we are quickly reaching a binary moment for the Chinese government in which they must either act to remove the threat of the Kim regime or face the certainty of economic collapse brought on by the U.S. One noted that, by virtue of the enormous amount of investment China has made in America over the past 20 years, it could easily be brought to heel with stiff economic sanctions.

And it seems that might be where the president—an aggressive negotiator in his past business dealings—is headed. In a series of tweets before leaving for Poland and then Germany for this week's G20 summit, he stated:

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