

US, South Korea, Japan 'Will Never Accept a Nuclear Armed' North Korea

Mere hours after giving perhaps the defining speech of his presidency to date, President Donald Trump boarded Air Force One for the short flight from Warsaw to Hamburg for the G20 summit—and immediately proceeded to have his most productive 24 hours on the world stage.

Upon arriving in Germany, the president immediately met with Chancellor Angela Merkel. According to the White House, they “conferred on a range of shared foreign and security policy priorities, including re-energizing implementation of the Minsk Agreements, de-escalating the conflict between Qatar and some of its Gulf and Arab neighbors and denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.”

The Korean Peninsula was the topic of discussion at a private dinner the president had with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Chinese President Xi Jinping was specifically not invited to attend, and afterward, the White House issued the following joint statement from the three leaders:

The three leaders condemned the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's unprecedented launch, on July 4, of a ballistic missile with intercontinental range, a major escalation that directly violates multiple United Nations Security Council resolutions and that clearly demonstrates the growing threat the DPRK poses to the United States, the Republic of Korea and Japan, as well as other countries around the world. The leaders affirmed the importance of working together to counter the DPRK threat and to achieve the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization

of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner, a shared goal among the three countries. They also committed to continue to cooperate to apply maximum pressure on the DPRK to change its path, refrain from provocative and threatening actions and take steps necessary to return to serious denuclearization dialogue. The three leaders emphasized that they, together with the rest of the international community, stand ready to offer a brighter future for the DPRK if it chooses the right path. The United States, the ROK and Japan will never accept a nuclear armed DPRK.

President Trump, President Moon and Prime Minister Abe decided to press for the early adoption of a new UNSC resolution with additional sanctions to demonstrate to the DPRK that there are serious consequences for its destabilizing, provocative and escalatory actions. They called on the international community to swiftly and fully implement all UNSC resolutions and to take measures to reduce economic relations with the DPRK. The three leaders also called on the nations that border the DPRK to make further efforts to convince the DPRK regime to abandon its current threatening and provocative path and immediately take steps to denuclearize and to halt its ballistic missile program.

The three leaders underscored their commitment to further strengthen their respective alliances and to ensure they continue to increase their capabilities to deter and respond to any attack from the DPRK. They committed to continue advancing trilateral security cooperation in the face of the threat posed by the DPRK. President Trump reaffirmed the ironclad commitment of the United States to defend the ROK and Japan using the full range of its conventional and nuclear capabilities.

The “nations that border the DPRK” is a direct reference to China and Russia, which are the only other countries that share a border with North Korea. Russia had reportedly blocked

a UN Security Council resolution that would have substantially strengthened sanctions against the Hermit Kingdom, claiming it could not prove the July 4 launch was indeed an ICBM.

Before the official kickoff of the G20 on Friday, the president also met with his Mexican counterpart, Enrique Peña Nieto, to, among other issues, discuss renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement. Peña Nieto made it clear border security, immigration and organized crime were very much on his mind, too, in comments made before they began their closed-door discussions.

The president was also scheduled to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin, face-to-face for the first time, for about 30 minutes Friday. Their meeting instead ran long—nearly two hours past the scheduled length—resulting in a lot of speculation from the liberal mainstream media about what was being discussed.

Reportedly, First Lady Melania Trump interrupted the meeting to tell them they had gone over, but they continued to talk for yet another hour. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson described the conversations as “intense,” saying the two leaders had an immediate chemistry that led to them having a good dialogue.

As of this writing, the White House has not yet released a readout of that meeting, but Tillerson did brief reporters on hand in Hamburg. The secretary of state said the two heads of state had a “very robust and lengthy exchange” on the subject of Russian attempts to interfere in the 2016 presidential election.

Tillerson said Putin, who was joined by his foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, denied the Russians had attempted to meddle in the election, but President Trump “pressed the issue.” He said Putin’s denials have created a “hindrance” to moving the relationship forward.

Lavrov, on the other hand, told reporters the president accepted Putin's assurances Russia did not attempt to interfere in the election. He said there had been a cease-fire agreement reached in Syria, that the leaders discussed having an open dialogue about Ukraine and that the two nations would begin working on joint cybersecurity issues.

They also agreed to replace their respective ambassadors. Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak is a former spymaster, and his presence in diplomatic circles in Washington, D.C., had been a concern to the Intelligence Community dating back to his appointment in 2008.

After the meeting, Russian media reported that Ukraine and Syria were major topics of discussion, as well. Tillerson suggested there had been an agreement reached on removing Bashar al-Assad from power, although the means that would be accomplished were yet to be worked out.

The secretary of state indicated the U.S. and Russia were still not seeing eye-to-eye on North Korea.

Some media in Hamburg were reporting that there had been some previous discussions on the sidelines between the two leaders prior to their scheduled meeting. The president alluded to those conversations in his opening remarks at the official meeting before going behind closed doors.

"President Putin and I have been discussing various things, and I think it's going very well," he said. "We've had some very, very good talks. We are going to have a talk now and obviously that will continue, but we look forward to a lot of very positive things happening for Russia, for the United States and for everybody concerned, and it's an honor to be with you."

Through an interpreter, Putin returned the president's warm greeting, and said he was happy to finally have a face-to-face meeting with his American counterpart.

"We have spoken on the phone with you several times before on very important bilateral and international issues," he said. "But phone conversation is never enough. I'm delighted to be able to meet you personally, Mr. President. And I hope, as you have said, our meeting will yield positive results."

Shortly after the meeting ended, Lavrov announced a cease-fire agreement had been reached in Syria, which will go into effect Sunday. The "de-escalation agreement" was worked out between the U.S. and Russia, with Jordan also being a party to the discussions, although King Abdullah II was not at the meetings.

The president is scheduled to return to the U.S. on Saturday.
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