

When an Aircraft Carrier Makes a U-Turn, North Korea Is Sent a Message

Over the weekend, President Donald Trump sent Congress his official notification of the missile strikes he ordered against a Syrian air base, as required by the *War Powers Resolution*.

He wrote:

At approximately 8:40 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time on April 6, 2017, at my direction, United States military forces in the Mediterranean Sea, operating beyond the territorial sea of any state, struck the Shayrat military airfield in Syria. United States intelligence indicates that Syrian military forces operating from this airfield were responsible for the chemical weapons attack on Syrian civilians in southern Idlib Province, Syria, that occurred on April 4. I directed this action in order to degrade the Syrian military's ability to conduct further chemical weapons attacks and to dissuade the Syrian regime from using or proliferating chemical weapons, thereby promoting the stability of the region and averting a worsening of the region's current humanitarian catastrophe.

I acted in the vital national security and foreign policy interests of the United States, pursuant to my constitutional authority to conduct foreign relations and as commander in chief and chief executive. The United States will take additional action, as necessary and appropriate, to further its important national interests.

I am providing this report as part of my efforts to keep the Congress fully informed, consistent with the War Powers Resolution (Public Law 93-148). I appreciate the support of

the Congress in this action.

Some may have thought the president was sending a message only to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad. Others may have thought it was a message to Russia and Iran, as well. But there clearly was a message sent to another despotic world leader:

North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un.

Simultaneous to his letter to Congress, the president directed Navy Adm. Harry Harris, commander of U.S. Pacific Command, to redirect the Carl Vinson Strike Group from Singapore to a position just off the Korean Peninsula. The aircraft carrier . *Carl Vinson* and its support ships, which have been deployed since early January, were originally intended to make a ports-of-call tour of Australia instead.

According to USPACCOM, the Nimitz-class carrier, which currently serves as the seaborne home of Carrier Air Wing 2, is supported by the Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers . Wayne E. Meyer and . Michael Murphy, and the Ticonderoga-class guided-missile cruiser . Lake Champlain. Meyer and Murphy are two of the Navy's most modern guided missile destroyers, capable of providing ballistic missile defense.

The president also spoke with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts over the weekend. The White House provided readouts of those phone calls on Monday.

First, his call to Acting President Hwang Kyo-Ahn of South Korea:

The leaders agreed that the use of chemical weapons, including Bashar al-Assad's April 4 attack on civilians, cannot be tolerated and that the international community should unite in its efforts to prevent further use of such weapons. President Trump thanked Acting President Hwang for his support for the United States strikes. The leaders also

reaffirmed the strength of the United States- Republic of Korea alliance and agreed to stay in close touch regarding North Korea and other issues of mutual concern.

And, in his call with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe:

The leaders agreed that Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons against civilians, including women and children, was abhorrent and warranted a strong response from the international community. President Trump thanked Prime Minister Abe for his support for the United States missile strikes in Syria, and the two leaders pledged to show continued resolve in response to al-Assad's brutal actions. President Trump and Prime Minister Abe also agreed to further cooperation on a range of regional issues, including the threat posed by North Korea. {eoa}