



N. Korea threatens nuclear strike as tensions growing

Trump sends 'very powerful' armada

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WASHINGTON — President Trump said he's sending "an armada" as North Korea escalated its war of words yesterday, warning of a nuclear strike against the U.S. mainland.

A U.S. Navy carrier is already heading to the region in a show of strength after a series of North Korean missile tests.

"We are sending an armada. Very powerful," Trump told the Fox Business Network in an interview due to air today. "We have submarines. Very powerful, far more powerful than the aircraft carrier. That I can tell you."

Trump added North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "is doing the wrong thing."

"We will hold the U.S. wholly accountable for the catastrophic consequences to be entailed by its outrageous actions," a Foreign Ministry spokesman said in a statement on North Korea's state-run Central News Agency.

"This goes to prove that the U.S.' reckless moves for invading the DPRK have reached a serious phase of its scenario," the statement said, referring to the North's formal name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"If the U.S. dares opt for a military action, crying out for 'pre-emptive attack' ... the DPRK is ready to react to any mode of war desired by the U.S."

North Korea's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper declared: "Our revolutionary strong army is keenly watching every move by enemy elements with our nuclear sight focused on the U.S. invasionary bases not only in South Korea and the Pacific operation theater but also in the U.S. mainland."

The heightened exchange of words came as North Korea, which has tested nuclear weapons in the past, has accelerated its ballistic missile testing program in an effort to build an intercontinental nuclear weapon capable of reaching the United States.

South Korea and the U.S. are conducting joint military exercises, with the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson and the other ships of Carrier Strike Group One making their way toward the Korean Peninsula.

On Twitter, Trump also aimed at China, which is seen as having influence over North Korea: “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.”

Trump also described how he pushed China to intervene during his first meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping last week.

“I explained to the President of China that a trade deal with the U.S. will be far better for them if they solve the North Korean problem!” Trump tweeted.

White House spokesman Sean Spicer said yesterday Trump “has made it clear with respect to North Korea, that their behavior and their actions with respect to the missile launches, that it’s 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,” Spicer said. “So we need stability in that region and I think he has put them clearly on notice.”

South Korean acting President Hwang Kyo-ahn warned, “It is possible the North may wage greater provocations such as a nuclear test timed with various anniversaries.”

Experts questioned whether Trump has done enough to spur action by China, which supplies North Korea with food and fuel.

“It’s not enough just to threaten them,” said Doug Bandow, a senior foreign policy fellow at the Cato Institute, noting that China won’t act against its own interests with North Korea even if it means a more favorable trade deal with the United States. “You’ve got to convince them it’s worth it.”

China also has its own concerns about causing more instability in the region, Barlow said, and Chinese leaders don’t take kindly to being strong-armed.

“This is a rising nationalistic power,” Barlow said. “Telling them what to do doesn’t get you very far because they have natural inclination to say, ‘Buzz off.’”

But Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) said Trump should try to persuade China with a stick on trade rather than a carrot.

“The Chinese have done nothing on North Korea and I don’t think they will unless they think America is tough,” Schumer said yesterday.

“The tougher we are on trade, the more likely the Chinese are going to do something on North Korea.”