



US Envoy to Seoul Urges China and Russia to Push North Korea to Denuclearize

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U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Philip Goldberg on Thursday called on China and Russia to do more to convince North Korea to denuclearize, reiterating Washington's recent messages that the two permanent U.N. Security Council (UNSC) members must live up to their commitments on sanctions.

"China, as well as the United States and Russia, all passed resolutions at the U.N. on the missile and nuclear developments in North Korea," he said at a press briefing organized by the Seoul Foreign Correspondents' Club (SFCC). "We all ought to follow that rules-based solution to getting to negotiations and to denuclearization."

"We believe that it is in all our interests to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula," he said, and called on China and Russia to promote regional peace and security and help convince Pyongyang to work toward this goal.

His comments follow recent remarks by Washington's U.N. envoy accusing China and Russia of "blatant obstructionism" as they continue to reject new sanctions or UNSC statements of condemnation over North Korea's continuing missile launches.

Doug Bandow, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, said that this repeated emphasis on denuclearization and calls for support from Moscow and Beijing will achieve very little.

"Russia and China support denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but they have other interests that matter more to them now," he told *NK News*, adding that they are more focused on countering Washington and shifting the balance of power in Asia in their favor.

"Even in Washington few people believe that denuclearization is still a viable strategy," he said. "It is time to develop a more realistic strategy than more U.N. resolutions and sanctions."

Goldberg reaffirmed Washington's commitment to "extended deterrence" to ensure security for South Korea and Japan amid North Korea's continuing "provocations," including the prospect of using nuclear weapons if needed.

"We have talked about extended deterrence, which includes our nuclear capabilities," he said. "If you look at our Nuclear Posture Review, it also talks about extended deterrence for [South] Korea and Japan."

Beyond the potential nuclear deterrent, he said the U.S. continues to work with the ROK and Japan through the ongoing deployment of strategic assets and joint exercises aimed at ensuring "mutual defense."

Goldberg was not certain when the U.S. will appoint a new North Korean human rights envoy, but said that he expects it to happen soon, possibly after the U.S. Congress begins its next session.

"I do believe it would be a very good signal," he said, adding that for now, others in Washington are continuing to work on the issue.

Goldberg declined to comment on local media reports that the U.S. Space Force will set up a unit within U.S. Forces Korea, but stressed that the space command is not the same as missile defense systems like THAAD, which is deployed in South Korea to counter North Korean missiles.