



Trump voters want him to tell the U.N.: America comes first

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They want him to scrap the Obama-era nuclear deal with Iran. They want him to bring American service members home. And they want him to stop sending money to help out other countries.

In other words, Donald Trump's supporters want to hear the president tell world leaders this week at the United Nations that America comes first.

"We're not the world's policeman just because something bad is going on and we need to save the day," said Tim Jones, former speaker of the Missouri House who now hosts a weekly, conservative radio show.

On North Korea, the topic most urgently on the agenda at the United Nation's annual gathering, Trump voters want the president to deliver more tough talk. But they also want him to get the rest of the global community to step up and take responsibility for stopping Pyongyang from lobbing missiles at America's allies in Asia and threatening nuclear war.

"I would love for him to go to the U.N. and actually get some other nations to actually join in as far as condemning North Korea and being more strict on them," said Brian Bledsoe, a Dallas truck driver who served as a delegate to the GOP convention in Texas last year.

Trump's administration successfully pushed the U.N. Security Council to pass sanctions against North Korea twice in recent weeks — once after the nation carried out its sixth and largest nuclear test. The Security Council dropped a full oil import ban and sanctions on North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

"We've got a lot of clout. We're not at the bottom of the food chain," said Robert Clark, a former drywall contractor and Marine from Columbia, S.C. "We need to stand up and use our influence with the other countries. We need to be firmer with our beliefs and use our clout."

Trump's first speech to the United Nations, on Tuesday follows a campaign in which he ridiculed the organization as an inefficient and inconsequential body and criticized its decision to condemn Israeli settlements in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. He also will host an event Monday to reform the U.N. attended by representatives of more than 100 nations.

“The United Nations has such great potential but right now it is just a club for people to get together, talk and have a good time. So sad!” he tweeted in December as he prepared to enter the White House.

The United States is the single biggest financial contributor to the United Nations, using a formula based on the size of a country’s economy, among other factors; Washington sends more than \$500 million a year to the organization’s regular budget, more if counting the U.N.’s other operations.

“I would like him to in no uncertain terms to put the United Nations on notice that we’re not going to tolerate their inactivity and ridiculousness anymore,” said Jerry Rovner, a retired Navy captain from Columbia, S.C. who served as a delegate to the Republican convention last year. “The amount of money spent by us — we could probably fix both hurricanes and bail people out from that. All we’re doing is pumping money into people who want to live like kings.”

Trump campaigned on a rejection of previous American administration’s attempts at globalization, instead latching onto a growing nationalist sentiment throughout the country with what he called an “America First” agenda. He carried that into the White House, making nationalism the theme of his inaugural address.

Since then, however, some of the aides who guided Trump’s beliefs and rhetoric on foreign affairs, including top strategist Steve Bannon and policy adviser Sebastian Gorka, have been ousted. Some of his voters now worry he has now deviated from Bannon’s philosophy, and they hope the president will use his United Nations address to set the record straight.

“Trump campaigned on restrained foreign policy. He campaigned against establishment policy,” said Brian Darling, who worked on Capitol Hill before founding his own public affairs and lobbying company. “I want to hear the president reflect what he campaigned on and what I voted for and not a continuation of failed policies in the past.”

Trump supporters cheered when he announced the United States would leave the Paris climate agreement, an international pact to combat global warming, even though he vowed to negotiate re-entering the deal if it doesn’t harm the American economy. And they supported his proposal to slash budgets for the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development by 37 percent.

“Is it really necessary to spend \$2 billion for foreign aid to XYZ country when we have to spend money in Florida for flood relief?” said a former Trump adviser who remains close to the Trump White House. “That’s real ‘America First.’”

They were encouraged when he criticized a landmark 2015 agreement designed to allow Iran to pursue a nuclear energy and research program but prevent it from producing a nuclear weapon. He must decide by Oct. 15 whether to certify Iran is complying with the deal.

They know — and like — that Trump views most domestic and global issues through a lens of “economic populism” and they want him to continue reiterating that the United States needs to negotiate better deals with countries.

“He needs to make the pitch — America needs to be great and strong because it makes the rest of the world strong,” said former state Rep. Mike Hill of the Florida Panhandle.

But some Trump supporters were surprised when he announced he would increase the number of troops in Afghanistan, breaking a campaign promise on America’s longest war by siding with military commanders over his nationalist advisers. And they were frustrated when he launched a military strike after Syrian President Bashar Assad used chemical weapons that killed dozens of civilians.

“It’s time to pull back on America’s interventionist foreign policy,” said John Glaser, director of foreign policy studies at the libertarian Cato Institute. “The United States needs to start to focus on its own interest, not on every nook and cranny around the globe.”