

North Korea tested again an intercontinental ballistic missile

Monday 31 July 2017, by [BUNCOMBE Andrew](#), [PHILLIPS Tom](#), [WORLEY Will](#) (Date first published: 29 July 2017).

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North Korea can now fire missiles at targets across the United States, experts say

'Regime change in North Korea means kiss Trump Tower goodbye,' says non-proliferation expert.

North Korea has the capability to “hit everything from LA to DC,” a leading missile and non-proliferation expert has claimed, and the US now must now “accept its vulnerability”.

Jeffrey Lewis, of the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California, said the US had to adapt to a “new reality” and focus on reducing tensions with North Korea, also known as the DPRK, rather than using coercion against it.

An intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), capable of carrying a nuclear warhead, was fired from Mupyong-ni, in the north of the DPRK on Friday evening, and landed within 200 nautical miles of the Japanese coast.

Weapons experts said that while the missile had a range of just around 1,000km, its apogee - the highest point it reached during flight - was up to 3,700km. It was in flight for 47 minutes.

The missile was fired more vertically than laterally, meaning its range was substantially reduced.

North Korea's latest test “demonstrated it can hit targets throughout the United States,” Mr Lewis told The Independent. “If you straighten out the apogee, that can basically hit everything from LA almost to [Washington] DC.”

Kim Jong-un made the same claim early on Saturday morning, AFP reported.

David Wright, co-director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' Global Security Program, published estimates of the missile's range soon after its launch.

He said that if the figures regarding the missile's range and apogee were correct, it “would have a range of 10,400 km (6,500 miles), not taking into account the rotation of the Earth.”

This would easily put it within range of Los Angeles, Denver and Chicago and just within range of Boston and New York, Dr Wright said. He also conceded Washington DC “may be just out of range”.

While previous US concerns over the range of North Korean missiles were mainly preoccupied with the prospect of places such as Alaska and Hawaii being targeted, the latest test means the US now has to “accept vulnerability,” Mr Lewis said.

“It’s about accepting that North Korea has nuclear weapons, that we can’t take them away from them, we have to deal with them like they have nuclear weapons,” he added.

“And honestly, what it means in some cases, is we will be deterred.”

Mr Lewis said the prospect of a change in the DPRK government - as some hawkish politicians and defence officials have advocated for - was no longer an option.

He said: “Regime change in North Korea means kiss Trump Tower goodbye.”

Dr John Nilsson-Wright, Senior Research Fellow on Chatham House’s Asia Programme, said the launch was “further evidence that Donald Trump’s efforts to deter North Korea ... aren’t working” and that the US president was “on the back foot”.

This is not the first ICBM test North Korea has carried out. That came last month, when Hwasong-14 was fired 2,802km into the air, travelling across 933km for 43 minutes. North Korea watchers and non-proliferation experts have been expecting another test, particularly around the time of Victory Day - the DPRK name for anniversary of the end of the Korean War.

The early July test meant many experts had already accepted North Korea had a weapon capable of hitting the US.

“When we say it’s a provocation, it really means we’ve refused to accept the evidence that’s been in front of our face for a long time,” said Mr Lewis.

He stressed today’s test was not an escalation of North Korea’s weapons programme, but simply a continuation of the test earlier in the month.

“They were clearly demonstrating this capability and we didn’t believe it,” Mr Lewis said.

Dr Nilsson-Wright concurred. “It confirms North Korea will continue along the path it set itself on”, he said. The country has wanted to develop nuclear weapons since the 1960s, he added, just a decade after it broke away from the South after a brutal civil war.

Mr Trump has vowed to “take care” of the issue of the North Korean weapons programme and his officials have said no options are “off the table”. But so far, no strategy has been forthcoming.

Dr John Nilsson-Wright said the test showed the failures of both the international community and successive US administrations, who failed to apply measures which successfully deterred, punished North Korea, or incentivised it to halt its programme.

The country has always shown its willingness to fly in the face of the international community, Dr Nilsson-Wright added.

Most analysts believe North Korea’s current objective is not to hit the US, but acquire the capability to.

According to Dr Nilsson-Wright, this is for a number of reasons, including strengthening its deterrent, securing the regime, and showing the DPRK remains strong.

So how does the international community move forward from Friday's events? According to Mr Lewis, the chance of North Korea ending its weapons programme through diplomacy has passed.

"There's nothing we can do," he said. "You don't fix this. You accept it, you deal with it. You move forward with the new reality."

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* The Independent Online, Saturday 29 July 2017 09:42 BST211:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-missile-test-icbm-japan-a7866101.html>

US and South Korea discuss 'military options' in wake of latest North Korea ICBM test

The US and South Korea have said they are considering military responses after the latest test of a intercontinental missile by North Korea.

Officials confirmed that the most recent missile tested by Pyongyang, which was in the air for 45 minutes before apparently landing in the waters of Japan's exclusive economic zone, was an ICBM.

Earlier this month, US officials said they believed North Korea had the capability of firing a missile that could reach Alaska. At the same time, reports said US intelligence officials believed North Korea was just one year away from completing a nuclear weapon that could be attached to such a weapon.

Reuters said that following North Korea's test, South Korean President Moon Jae-in ordered discussions to be held with the United States on deploying additional anti-missile defence units. Senior US and South Korean military officials also discussed their military options in response to the North's actions.

The news agency said Marine General Joseph Dunford was joined by the Commander of US Pacific Command, Admiral Harry Harris, when they called General Lee Sun-jin, chairman of the South Korean Joint Chief of Staff.

"During the call Dunford and Harris expressed the ironclad commitment to the US-Republic of Korea alliance. The three leaders also discussed military response options," said Captain Greg Hicks, a spokesman for Mr Dunford.

The Pentagon said the US was aware of the launch of the North Korean missile while it was still in flight. It said it was launched from Mupyong-ni, an arms plant in the far north of North Korea, and travelled about 620 miles before splashing down.

Pentagon spokesman Capt Jeff Davis said in a statement: "The North American Aerospace Defence

Command (NORAD) determined the missile launch from North Korea did not pose a threat to North America.”

Japanese officials said they believed the missile flew for 45 minutes and reached an altitude of more than 1,860 miles.

“As a result of their launches of ICBM-level missiles, this clearly shows the threat to our nation’s safety is severe and real,” Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said. He said he was convening Japan’s National Security Council.

The European Union called the launch “an outright violation” of international obligations and a serious threat to international peace and security. It urged North Korea to engage in dialogue to pursue denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Along with North Korea’s series of tests of missiles, the US has been sabre-rattling at Pyongyang, with Donald Trump insisting that no options were off the table. He has repeatedly asked China to try and use its leverage to force the North to cancel its nuclear weapons programme.

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* The Independent. Friday 28 July 2017 20:28 BST:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/north-korea-missile-test-icbm-trump-military-options-kim-jong-un-response-a7865991.html>

North Korea missile test shows it could reach New York, say experts

If Friday’s launch is confirmed to be a ballistic missile it would mark the second time in July Pyongyang has launched such a weapon.

The North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, has issued a fresh challenge to Donald Trump by conducting a second ballistic missile test-launch which experts said placed US cities in range of potential attack.

The missile launch was meant as a “stern warning” for the US, North Korea’s state news agency said. The ICBM, which aimed for “maximum distance”, flew for 47 minutes and 12 seconds while travelling 998km (620 miles) and reaching a maximum altitude of 3,724.9 meters (12,220ft), the North said.

The test was ordered by the North’s leader, Kim Jong-un, who was cited as saying that the launch reaffirmed the reliability of the country’s ICBM system and an ability to fire at “random regions and locations at random times” with the “entire” US mainland now within range.

Kim said the launch sent a “serious warning” to the US, which has been “meaninglessly blowing its trumpet” with threats of war and stronger sanctions, the news agency said.

The launch on Friday from Chagang province came less than a month after Pyongyang claimed to have tested its first ICBM.

US officials told NBC the missile had flown for about 1,000km and had landed within Japan's exclusive economic zone.

"We assess that this missile was an intercontinental ballistic missile, as had been expected," Pentagon spokesman Jeff Davis said in a statement. "The missile was launched from Mupyong-ni and traveled about 1,000km before splashing down in the Sea of Japan. We are working with our interagency partners on a more detailed assessment," he said.

Melissa Hanham, an expert in North Korea's missile program from the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, said the test showed that "Alaska was in range" and a 45-minute test flight suggested it could reach New York City.

Jeffrey Lewis of the California-based Middlebury Institute of International Studies said the launch showed Los Angeles was within range of a North Korean missile, but that Chicago, New York City and Washington DC remained just out of reach.

"They may not have demonstrated the full range. The computer models suggest it can hit all of those targets," he said.

In a telephone conversation after the test, the heads of the US and South Korean militaries discussed "military response options", the Pentagon said.

Gen Joe Dunford, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, and Adm Harry Harris, who heads the US military's Pacific command, spoke with the chair of South Korea's joint chiefs of staff, Gen Lee Sun Jin.

Japan led the international condemnation of North Korea's latest launch, which appeared to have been timed to mark commemorations of the end of Korean war in 1953.

"This clearly shows the threat to our nation's safety is severe and real," said Japan's prime minister, Shinzo Abe, vowing to do "our utmost to protect the safety of the Japanese people".

"We cannot accept these repeated provocations by North Korea," Japan's chief cabinet secretary, Yoshihide Suga, told reporters.

South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, chaired an national security council meeting in the early hours of Saturday. The defence minister, Song Young-moo, later said Seoul would prepare independent measures to curb the North's nuclear threat.

"Along with joint efforts to deter proliferation we will prepare independent measures to curb it as soon as possible," Song told a press conference in Seoul.

The United Nations secretary-general, Antonio Guterres, condemned the launch of a "ballistic missile of possible intercontinental range", his spokesman said in a statement.

Russia - which maintains warm diplomatic relations with Pyongyang - disputed the US and Japanese description of the missile, saying it appeared to be a "medium-range" weapon, not an ICBM.

Earlier this month, Moscow blocked a UN security council statement condemning North Korea's last missile launch because it said that rocket was also medium-range, despite assertions by the US and Pyongyang.

Beijing offered no immediate reaction but Lü Chao, a Chinese North Korea expert, told the state-run

Global Times newspaper that his government would “firmly oppose the launch since it intensified regional tension ... and jeopardised the situation in north-east Asia”.

North Korea’s latest missile test came hours after Kim Jong-un had visited a military cemetery to mark the 64th anniversary of the 1953 armistice.

A test had been expected to mark that anniversary. However, Hanham said the timing and the location of the launch were highly unusual because Pyongyang usually conducted such tests shortly after dawn, not late at night, and had not previously launched a missile from Chagang province.

Details of the launch remained sketchy but Hanham said she suspected the missile being tested was the same Hwasong-14 projectile that Kim Jong-un’s regime had launched on 4 July.

“That test showed that Alaska was in range ... [and] my preliminary guess is that they are now testing this missile to see whether it can go further. We need to get all the data points to be able to calculate the range curve but it is possible that they are trying to demonstrate that indeed New York is not that far away.”

A range of 9,500-10,000km (5,900-6,200 miles) – which a 45-minute flight time suggested was possible – meant North Korea could potentially strike at east coast targets such as New York City, Hanham pointed out.

Analysts remain skeptical as to whether North Korea has the ability to miniaturise a nuclear weapon that could be fired on such a missile. Even so, the launch is the latest reminder of Trump’s failure to advance in his bid to rein in Kim’s nuclear ambitions.

Experts say the US president had hoped to form a “big marriage” with China, which would have seen the world’s top two economies tackle Pyongyang together, with Beijing putting economic pressure on its ally.

However the Chinese president, Xi Jinping, fearing the impact the collapse of Kim’s regime would have on China, has appeared unwilling to enter into such a partnership. Following North Korea’s ICBM test in early July, Beijing rejected Trump’s calls for it to do more, claiming the “China responsibility theory” had to stop.

Pyongyang, meanwhile, has continued its rhetorical war against Washington. “If enemies misunderstand our strategic status and stick to options of staging a pre-emptive nuclear attack against us, we will launch a nuclear attack on America’s heart as the most relentless punishment without warning or prior notice,” the head of North Korea’s armed forces, Pak Yong-sik, told state media earlier this week.

Hanham said Friday night’s test would be a major headache for a White House already reeling from the dramatic defeat of the healthcare repeal bill that morning.

“Washington is very busy with other things right now, unfortunately. The healthcare vote was an incredible blow to the Republican party. I suspect that many in office are licking their wounds today,” she said. “The US state department is not fully staffed. I don’t think they are staffed up for this event.”

Tom Phillips in Beijing

* The Guardian. Saturday 29 July 2017 03.03 BST First published on Friday 28 July 2017 16.47 BST: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/28/north-korea-fires-missile-japan-reports-say>

China and Russia have 'responsibility' for North Korea nuclear threat, says US

As Kim Jong-un hails latest test-launch, Rex Tillerson says two powers are 'enablers' of Pyongyang's program.

The United States has accused China and Russia of bearing "unique and special responsibility" for North Korea's "belligerent" pursuit of nuclear weapons, after Pyongyang tested its latest ballistic missile.

North Korea conducted its second intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test late on Friday in what it called a warning to the "beast-like US imperialists". It came less than a month after its first such experiment, on 4 July.

The test-launch sent "a grave warning to the US" that it "would not go scot-free if it dares provoke" the North, Pyongyang's official news agency, KCNA, said in a statement.

"If the Yankees brandish the nuclear stick on this land again despite our repeated warnings, we will clearly teach them manners," KCNA warned.

The news agency described Pyongyang's weapons programs as a "precious strategic asset that cannot be bartered for anything" and an indication of the country's "tremendous might".

The US secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, hit back on Saturday, describing North Korea's launch as a "blatant violation" of multiple UN security council resolutions.

Tillerson also pointed the finger of blame at Beijing and Moscow.

"As the principal economic enablers of North Korea's nuclear weapon and ballistic missile development program, China and Russia bear unique and special responsibility for this growing threat to regional and global stability," he said in a statement.

Tillerson's comments are sure to anger Russia and China. Earlier this month Beijing rejected claims from US president Donald Trump that it had a responsibility to do more to rein in its ally. "I think this either shows lack of a full, correct knowledge of the issue, or there are ulterior motives for it, trying to shift responsibility," Geng Shuang, a foreign ministry spokesman, told reporters.

On Saturday, China's foreign ministry made no reference to Tillerson's comments but called on Pyongyang "to respect United Nations security council resolutions and stop all acts that could worsen tensions on the Korean peninsula".

China also "urged all the relevant parties to act with caution" to prevent the situation from escalating, the ministry added, parroting previous language on the issue.

Bonnie Glaser, the director of the China power project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) thinktank in Washington, said Kim Jong-un's latest test - of a missile some experts said had the capacity to reach New York - would increase Chinese fears of a US strike against the North.

"I suspect that the Chinese are going to be worried about the possibility of a US military strike on North Korea going forward ... The Chinese can't rule out the Trump 'unpredictability' factor," she said.

Last week the US's top military officer told a security forum in Aspen, Colorado that conflict with North Korea was not "unimaginable".

"What's unimaginable to me is allowing a capability that would allow a nuclear weapon to land in Denver, Colorado - that's unimaginable to me. And so my job will be to develop military options to make sure that doesn't happen," said Gen Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff.

Glaser said it was hard to predict whether Trump's White House was genuinely pondering such military options, which might include attempting to destroy a North Korean missile on the launch pad before it was fired. But following Friday's test, calls for a return to negotiations appeared increasingly unrealistic. "Diplomacy seems very unlikely at present."

Jeffrey Lewis, a North Korea specialist at the Middlebury institute of international studies, said he believed a military strike against North Korea had become unthinkable in the light of the ICBM tests, which showed Pyongyang could hit targets on US soil by launching missiles from unexpected locations and at unexpected times.

"The North Koreans wanted to demonstrate that ... if there was a war they could definitely launch [missiles] in the dead of night from some place we don't expect so we wouldn't have a chance to fire at them before they got off the ground."

"What I think this changes is that it forces the US to confront something that we have said for a long-time is unacceptable ... [that] they can target New York and LA and there is not much we can do about it."

"The window for [military action] has closed. People are jumping up and down and screaming [in Washington] not because they are getting ready to attack but because they don't really have that option any more and they accept that it has gone," Lewis added.

"Attacking a nuclear-armed state is usually a bad idea - which is why countries build nuclear weapons. That is kind of the appeal."

Tom Phillips in Beijing

* The Guardian. Saturday 29 July 2017 05.21 BST Last modified on Saturday 29 July 2017 15.51 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/29/china-and-russia-have-responsibility-for-north-korea-nuclear-threat-says-us>
