

Articles on the US-North Korea crisis (VI) - After North Korea fired another ballistic missile over Japan

Saturday 16 September 2017, by [BAYNES Chris](#), [BORGER Julian](#), [CHOE Sang-Hun](#), [McCURRY Justin](#), [PHILLIPS Tom](#), [SCHWARZ Jon](#), [SHARMAN Jon](#), [WHITE Jeremy B](#), [WINTOUR Patrick](#) (Date first published: 15 September 2017).

Contents

- [North Korea fires ballistic](#)
- [We will sink Japan and turn US](#)
- [Tillerson on North Korea](#)
- [Latest North Korea missile](#)
- [South Korea says it could](#)
- [South Korea readying 'decapita](#)
- [US warns of military option if](#)
- [US must stop North Korea \(...\)](#)
- [Russia condemns Trump administ](#)
- [North Korea has been saying](#)
- [North Korea missiles 'now](#)

North Korea fires ballistic missile over Japan, forcing country into latest state of alert

Pyongyang's launch of ballistic missile comes after threat to 'sink' Japan and UN approval of new sanctions.

North Korea has fired a ballistic missile over Japan, its latest act of aggression against a neighbour and key Western ally amid a escalating war of rhetoric with the United States. The missile launch will prove a stern test for both President Doanld Trump and the UN who have so far failed to get Pyongyang to rein in its nuclear ambitions.

The Japanese government said the missile, which was launched from Pyongyang's Sunan district, had passed over Hokkaido and the country's military did not try to shoot it down. The US military also said it had detected an intermediate-range ballistic missile, with Defence Secretary Jim Mattis saying the projectile "put millions of Japanese into duck and cover". Japan issued a nationwide alert that urged residents in the country's north to take shelter, and Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters he condemned the attack in the strongest possible terms.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged China and Russia to take direct action against North Korea in response to its latest missile launch. "China and Russia must indicate their intolerance for these reckless missile launches by taking direct actions of their own," he said in a statement.

This is the second time in recent weeks that a North Korean missile has flown over Japan, putting

the country on high alert and emphasising the stakes as North Korea accompanies hostile language with displays of more sophisticated military technology.

That provocative conduct has repeatedly spurred the United Nations to action but to little effect. Leaders are gathering soon for a United Nations General Assembly meeting, the first for Donald Trump. The UN Security Council planned to convene a meeting today to discuss the latest firing.

While the White House confirmed that Mr Trump had been briefed last night, Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders referred reporters to the State Department and the Department of Defense for a response. Earlier in the day Mr Trump told reporters that “people in this country will be very, very safe.”

The latest missile reportedly travelled 3,700 km, farther than the 2,700 km logged by the prior missile hurled over Japan and far enough to potentially strike the American territory of Guam. North Korea has issued a series of threats against Guam, which hosts a substantial American military presence, and Korean state media called the prior test of a missile over Japan a “a meaningful prelude to containing Guam”. In a statement, US Pacific Command said the latest missile “did not pose a threat to Guam”.

An increasingly assertive North Korea has been displaying its advances in military technology by launching a steady drumbeat of missile tests and, last weekend, performing its sixth nuclear test that was far more powerful than previous attempts.

In the wake of that test, the UN approved the latest round of sanctions, which seek to further stifle North Korea’s economy by limiting energy exports and banning textile exports. But in response North Korea lashed out with a statement calling to “annihilate the US imperialist aggressors” and “reduce the U.S. mainland into ashes and darkness”.

The statement, issued by a spokesman for the government-run Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee and carried by Korean propaganda arm KCNA, also advocated the destruction of Japan.

“The four islands of the archipelago should be sunken into the sea by the nuclear bomb of Juche. Japan is no longer needed to exist near us”, the spokesman said.

While the United States initially did not formally concur with North Korea’s statement that the device used for that nuclear test was a hydrogen bomb, yesterday Air Force General John Hyten cited the blast’s size in telling reporters that “I’m assuming it was a hydrogen bomb”.

As North Korean has continued to defy the world with weapons tests and belligerent rhetoric, the warnings from Washington have kept pace. Donald Trump contributed to rising tensions when he warned in August that the United States would respond with “fire and fury” to continued menacing from North Korean.

Since then, as North Korea has continued to flex its muscles, while the Trump administration has consistently kept the use of military force on the table. Mr Mattis has said America would marshal a “massive military response” to threats from North Korea saying America was capable of “the total annihilation of a country”.

Before the latest missile launch Mr Trump alluded to working with China to tackle the North Korean peril, saying “we have a great relationship with China, and the president of China”, though China has chastised the US for escalating tensions. Mr Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping emphasized a nonmilitary response after recently discussing the standoff on the phone, though Mr Trump pointedly did not rule it out.

In an interview with Sky News, Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull condemned the latest launch as “dangerous” and “criminal” but portrayed it as a sign that the latest sanctions imposed on North Korea are having their intended effect.

“This is a sign, I believe, of their frustration at the increased sanctions on North Korea, recently imposed by the Security Council. It’s a sign that the sanctions are working.”

Jeremy B White San Francisco

* The Independent Online. Friday 15 September 2017 08:09 BST237:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-missile-japan-latest-launch-test-crisis-news-updates-trump-us-a7947626.html>

We will sink Japan and turn US to ‘ashes and darkness’, says North Korea

Tokyo condemns ‘absolutely unacceptable’ provocation, as Pyongyang reacts to imposition of new UN sanctions following missile tests.

North Korea has threatened to sink Japan and said the US should be “beaten to death like a rabid dog” after the two countries spearheaded fresh UN security council sanctions in response to the regime’s recent nuclear test.

The Korea Asia-Pacific peace committee, which oversees North Korea’s relations with the outside world, described the UN security council, which passed a new round of sanctions on Monday, as a “tool of evil” in the pay of Washington, and called for it to be broken up.

It is the first time that Pyongyang has issued an explicit threat to Japan since it fired a medium-range ballistic missile over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido at the end of last month, triggering emergency sirens and mass text alerts.

“The four islands of the [Japanese] archipelago should be sunken into the sea by the nuclear bomb of Juche,” the committee said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency. Juche is the ideology of self-reliance pioneered by Kim Il-sung, the country’s founder and grandfather of the current leader, Kim Jong-un.

“Japan is no longer needed to exist near us,” the committee added.

The 15-member security council voted unanimously in support of a US-drafted resolution condemning the missile test and imposing measures that include a ban on North Korean textile imports and restrictions on oil exports to the country.

In response, the committee said the US should be “beaten to death like a rabid dog” for the “heinous sanctions resolution”.

“Let’s reduce the US mainland into ashes and darkness. Let’s vent our spite with mobilisation of all retaliation means which have been prepared till now,” it said.

Japan’s top government spokesman, Yoshihide Suga, described the statement as “extremely

provocative and egregious”.

He added: “It is something that markedly heightens regional tension and is absolutely unacceptable.”

A new report has claimed that the detonation on 3 September of what North Korea claimed was a hydrogen bomb involved a device with an estimated yield of 250 kilotons – making it far more powerful than initially thought.

The US-based 38 North website noted that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organisation had revised upwards the seismic power created by the test from magnitude 5.8 to 6.1.

It added: “This revision is significant because, rather than providing an equivalent yield of about 120 kilotons derived from the lower magnitude estimates, the application of standard formula with appropriate constants shows that the yield can now be estimated to have been roughly 250 kilotons (one quarter megaton).

“Regardless of whether this most recent test was an operational warhead for an ICBM [intercontinental ballistic missile] or simply a device, the yield of the test clearly shows North Korean progress in increasing the yields of their nuclear weapons.”

After weeks of heightened tensions and threats emanating from Pyongyang and Washington, there are signs that US and other officials may be attempting to engage the regime diplomatically.

Japan’s public broadcaster NHK claimed on Thursday that US and North Korean officials had met “secretly” on the sidelines of a security forum in Switzerland earlier this month.

The report did not offer details, but said that Choe Kang-il, deputy director general for North American affairs at the North Korean foreign ministry, and Evans Revere, a former senior official at the state department, had raised North Korea’s ballistic missile and nuclear tests.

While Japan’s prime minister, Shinzo Abe, has refused to consider negotiations unless Pyongyang abandons its nuclear weapons programme, an MP has claimed that support is rising inside the governing Liberal Democratic party for possible engagement with the regime.

Antonio Inoki, a former professional wrestler, said he had spoken to several unnamed LDP MPs who supported sending a delegation of Japanese parliamentarians to Pyongyang in an attempt to defuse tensions.

“We are seeing a situation where [Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un] is raising his fist, and the situation is escalating,” said Inoki, who met North Korea’s top diplomat, Ri Su-yong, and other officials during a trip to Pyongyang last week. “It’s important to see who can be the first to lower his fist and reduce tensions.”

The 74-year-old, who has visited North Korea 32 times, said LDP lawmakers had become more receptive to the idea of dialogue. “The political wind has changed direction,” he said, adding that North Korean officials were receptive to the idea. “I made a proposal and was told they would be happy to receive such a delegation.”

In another gesture apparently aimed at lowering the diplomatic temperature, South Korea’s government is considering an \$8m (£6m) aid package for North Korea.

Seoul suspended aid to North Korea, provided via UN agencies, after the regime conducted nuclear

and missile tests in 2016. But under a proposal that could be approved next week, the South would provide \$4.5m to a World Food Programme project to help infants and pregnant women, and \$3.5m to Unicef, according to Yonhap news agency.

“The government’s basic stance is that humanitarian assistance to those who are vulnerable in North Korea should be continued regardless of political considerations,” Yonhap quoted a unification ministry official in Seoul as saying.

“Seoul plans to decide the details of the aid and its timing after taking into account the inter-Korean situation,” he added.

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

* The Guardian. Thursday 14 September 2017 07.58 BST Last modified on Friday 15 September 2017 01.05 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/14/north-korea-threat-sink-japan-us-ashes-darkness>

Tillerson on North Korea: Russia and China must take ‘direct action’ over missile launch

Japanese PM says Pyongyang has ‘no bright future’ and calls for UN security council meeting after projectile flew over island of Hokkaido.

Japan has warned North Korea it has “no bright future” and called for an emergency meeting of the UN security council after Pyongyang launched a ballistic missile over Japanese territory for the second time in just over a fortnight.

The missile, thought to be intermediate-range, flew further than any missile tested by the regime, triggering emergency sirens and text alerts minutes before it passed over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido on Friday morning.

The US secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, called for the international community to take “new measures” against North Korea, singling out Russia and China as the countries best placed to apply pressure on the regime, almost week after it tested what is now believed to be a powerful hydrogen bomb.

As major suppliers of oil to the regime, Russia and China “must indicate their intolerance for these reckless missile launches by taking direct actions of their own,” Tillerson said in a statement.

The launch was an apparent show of defiance days after the UN security council approved a new round of sanctions against the regime. Flight data shows the missile travelled higher and further than the one involved in the 29 August flyover of Japan, suggesting the regime is continuing to make advances in its missile and nuclear weapons programmes.

The UN security council is due to meet in New York at 3pm local time on Friday to discuss the launch.

Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister, called the launch “absolutely unacceptable”. He said the recent UN resolution banning North Korean textile exports and capping the supply of oil to the country “showed the international community’s unified strong will for a peaceful solution. But despite that, North Korea has again carried out this outrageous conduct.

“Now is the time when the international community is required to unite against North Korea’s provocative acts, which threaten world peace,” Abe told reporters shortly after arriving back in Tokyo from a trip to India. “We must make North Korea understand that if it continues down this road, it will not have a bright future.”

The US defence secretary, James Mattis, said North Korea’s latest “reckless act” had “put millions of Japanese in duck and cover”.

Asked about a possible US military response, Mattis said: “I don’t want to talk on that yet”, adding that Donald Trump had been briefed on the launch.

The Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Beijing objected to North Korea’s latest launch but believed diplomacy was the only way to solve the “complicated, sensitive and grim” problem.

“The top priority is now to prevent any provocative acts,” Hua told reporters.

But Hua rejected the theory - advanced, among others, by Trump and Theresa May - that Beijing held the key to thwarting Kim Jong-un’s nuclear and missile ambitions.

“China is not the focus. China is not the driving force behind the escalating situation. And China is not the key to resolving the issue,” Hua said. Hua said China had already made “great sacrifices” and “paid a high price” in its bid to help rein in Pyongyang: “China’s willingness and its efforts to fulfill its relevant international responsibilities cannot be questioned.”

In an online editorial, the Communist party-controlled Global Times newspaper, said it was the US and South Korea, not China, that needed “to guide North Korea into a new strategic direction” through dialogue.

“An isolated North Korea will be more rational if the international society treats it in a rational way,” argued the newspaper, which sometimes reflects official views. It said attempts to intimidate North Korea with threats or shows of force would fail.

“This morning, South Korea launched two missiles in immediate response to North Korea’s launch. This will only encourage the North. Does Seoul truly believe that its missiles will scare Pyongyang?”

Chinese experts believe significant new steps from Beijing are out of the question. “I don’t expect China to make any radical [moves],” said Zhao Tong, a North Korea expert at Beijing’s Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy.

“According to the data we already [have] it looks like a similar missile to the [Hwasong-12] that North Korea launched on 29 August: a similar missile, a similar range, a similar trajectory. In other words, it wasn’t that big a provocation, just a repetition of a previous action ... Of course it overflowed Japan – that is serious – but, again, it is not the first time in the last month that North Korea did this.”

Beijing would also believe that recent UN sanctions should be given time to take effect before further action was needed. Zhao said: “We have already got two new UN security council resolutions in just over one month. Very radical measures were adopted. So I don’t expect China to respond with

any additional radical measures.”

North Korea test-fired two intercontinental ballistic missiles believed capable of reaching the US mainland in July; and late last month it sent an intermediate-range missile over the same region of northern Japan where alerts were sounded on Friday morning.

South Korea’s president, Moon Jae-in, called an emergency meeting of his national security council, while the South demonstrated its own firepower by conducting a ballistic missile launch off the east coast of the Korean peninsula.

South Korea’s foreign ministry said the missile test was a “very serious and grave challenge” to global security and urged the North to abandon its quest to develop weapons of mass destruction.

“North Korea should clearly realise that its abandonment of nuclear and missile development is the only way to guarantee its security and economic development,” the ministry said, adding that Pyongyang should “stop reckless provocations immediately and come to the path of dialogue for denuclearisation as soon as possible”.

Soon after Friday’s launch, the US Pacific Command said it believed North Korea had fired an intermediate-range ballistic missile.

South Korea’s joint chiefs of staff said the missile was launched from Sunan, the location of Pyongyang’s international airport.

North Korea used the airport to fire a Hwasong-12 intermediate range missile that flew over northern Japan last month – an act it said was a “meaningful prelude” to containing the US Pacific island territory of Guam and carrying out more ballistic missile launches towards the Pacific.

The South Korean and US militaries were analysing details of the launch but the projectile appears to have flown higher and further than the missile that passed over the same region of Japan at the end of August.

Initial data said the missile flew 3,700km (2,300 miles) and reached an altitude of 770km – signs that North Korea is continuing to make progress towards its aim of perfecting a missile capable of striking the US mainland. The missile landed in the Pacific Ocean about 2,000km east of Hokkaido’s Cape Erimo. The previous launch landed in the Pacific about 1,180km east of Cape Erimo.

Japan’s J-Alert warning system advised people living below the missile’s flight path on the northern island of Hokkaido to seek shelter. Japan’s self-defence forces did not attempt to shoot down the missile and there were no reports of damage from falling debris.

North Korea has recently stepped up pressure on Japan over its unwavering support for US-led sanctions. On Thursday the regime threatened to sink Japan and reduce the US to “ashes and darkness” for supporting last week’s UN security council resolution.

Earlier on Thursday, the US general who oversees America’s nuclear forces said he was making the assumption that North Korea did in fact test a hydrogen bomb on 3 September, crossing a key threshold in its weapons development efforts.

Although Pyongyang immediately claimed that it had successfully tested a hydrogen bomb, the US had previously declined to characterise it.

Air Force General John Hyten, the head of the US military’s strategic command, however, said that,

as a military officer responsible for responding to the test, he had to assume it was a hydrogen bomb based on the size of the blast and the fact there was a secondary explosion.

"I'm assuming it was a hydrogen bomb," Hyten told a small group of reporters who were accompanying Mattis on a trip to Hyten's headquarters in Nebraska. "I have to make that assumption as a military officer."

Justin McCurry in Tokyo and **Tom Phillips** in Beijing

Additional reporting by Wang Zhen in Beijing

* The Guardian. Friday 15 September 2017 10.29 BST First published on Thursday 14 September 2017 23.23 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/14/north-korean-launches-unidentified-missile>

Latest North Korea missile test ends South's talk of engagement

South Korean president's new stance, that 'dialogue is impossible', will be welcomed by Japan, US and UK.

North Korea's latest missile launch may be the latest in a long line, and widely predicted, but familiarity is not reassuring. The 2,300-mile (3,700km) flight of the missile – further than any missile tested by the regime – over Japan only serves to sharpen the policy choices facing the rest of the world.

The most immediate diplomatic impact, apart from another call for an emergency meeting of the UN security council, is that Pyongyang's decision has put paid to South Korea's lingering interest in reviving talks with its northern neighbours.

"Dialogue is impossible in a situation like this," the president, Moon Jae-in, told his national security council. Moon, elected on a policy of engagement with his northern neighbours, warned the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, that "we have the power to destroy North Korea and make it unable to recover". He promised to closely analyse and prepare for new possible North Korean threats, like EMP (electro-magnetic pulse) and biochemical attacks.

The evolution in his stance will be welcome in Japan, America and London. The UK foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, speaking before the latest missile launch, had pointedly said at a joint press conference in London with Rex Tillerson, the US secretary of state, on Thursday that "now was not the time to send other hares running about attempts at engagement".

In a further statement after news of the latest missile test, Johnson again called for the international community to unite. The Foreign Office thinks China has done more than it might have been expected to do, but it is still insufficient.

Tillerson himself turned the issue back to China and Russia, as the US has repeatedly done in the past. "China supplies North Korea with most of its oil. Russia is the largest employer of North Korean forced labour," he said in a statement. "China and Russia must indicate their intolerance for

these reckless missile launches by taking direct actions of their own.”

In London on Thursday, Tillerson had admitted that the latest round of sanctions passed by the security council only on Monday had stopped well short of what the US and its allies had been seeking. “We had been hoping for a very much stronger resolution”, he admitted, even if he praised the complete prohibition of textiles as representing a loss of \$700m annual income to North Korea. The very fact that the UN security council had remained united was important, he added, more lamely.

Unity at the UN had been bought at the expense of dropping US calls for a complete ban of oil exports to North Korea, the one measure China will not so far countenance, and the one measure that would bring the North Korean economy to the brink of collapse in a matter of months.

Tillerson added: “I hope China as a great country will decide on its own to take upon itself to use that powerful tool of oil supply to persuade North Korea to reconsider its approach. It is a very powerful tool which they alone really have the ability to assert. It has been used in the past.”

The immediate reaction from the Chinese foreign ministry did not suggest a change in its opposition towards military action against North Korea, which could trigger a refugee crisis. The ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying again emphasised diplomatic solutions.

Hua said China had made enormous sacrifices to implement UN security council resolutions and that its sincerity could not be doubted.

In a sign that Trump may be willing to use more than Twitter to cajole the Chinese, the president said he would travel to China, as well as Seoul and Tokyo, before the end of the year to discuss the crisis. It would be a sign of respect, and put some of the bluster to one side. In the words of the US diplomat Christopher Hill, the visit could provide the chance the US and China need to agree a strategy.

For some diplomats there is a fear that mounting sanctions are not deterring Kim, and are only incentivising him to speed up his programme. The danger is that North Korea’s physicists are working to an altogether different and faster timetable than the New York diplomats.

Patrick Wintour

* The Guardian. Friday 15 September 2017 11.21 BST Last modified on Friday 15 September 2017 12.46 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/15/north-korea-latest-missile-test-south-talk-engagement>

South Korea says it could ‘destroy North Korea beyond recovery’ after latest Pyongyang missile test

Dialogue is ‘impossible in a situation like this,’ says Moon Jae-in.

South Korea’s president has said the country possesses the power to destroy its northern neighbour

“beyond recovery”, following Pyongyang’s latest missile test flight over Japan.

Moon Jae-in also said dialogue with the Kim Jong-un was “impossible in a situation like this”, South Korea’s Yonhap news agency reported.

Mr Moon said: “In case North Korea undertakes provocations against us or our ally, we have the power to destroy [them] beyond recovery.

“Dialogue is impossible in a situation like this. International sanctions and pressure will further tighten to force North Korea to choose no other option but to step forward on the path to genuine dialogue.”

The missile, thought to be of the same Hwasong-12 type fired over Japan last month, passed over the northern Hokkaido island and travelled a total of about 2,300 miles, the furthest yet.

Seoul said it was the 19th ballistic missile launched by North Korea this year. Pyongyang carried out its sixth nuclear test last week.

Mr Moon also ordered the South’s military to conduct live-fire ballistic missile tests in response.

Nato called for a “global response” to the latest test.

The UN Security Council unanimously approved new sanctions earlier this week over the nuclear test.

They ban all textile exports and prohibit any country from authorizing new work permits for North Korean workers—two key sources of hard currency.

They also prohibit North Korea from importing all natural gas liquids and condensates, and cap Pyongyang’s imports of crude oil and refined petroleum products.

Jon Sharman

Additional reporting by agencies

* The Independent Online. Friday 15 September 2017 08:31 BST:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/south-korea-north-pyongyang-missile-test-japan-nuclear-crisis-seoul-moon-jae-in-destroy-a7947716.html>

South Korea readying ‘decapitation unit’ hit squad to take out Kim Jong-un

Seoul’s Defence Minister Song Young-moo announces formation of elite special forces brigade in bid to intimidate nuclear neighbour’s rogue leader into ending brinkmanship.

South Korean marines during a military exercise on Baengnyeong Island, near the disputed sea border with North Korea, last week Choi Jae-gu/Yonhap/Reuters

The last time South Korea is known to have plotted to assassinate the North Korean leadership, nothing went as planned.

In the late 1960s, after North Korean commandos tried to ransack the presidential palace in Seoul, South Korea secretly trained misfits plucked from prison or off the streets to sneak into North Korea and slit the throat of its leader, Kim Il-sung. When the mission was aborted, the men mutinied.

They killed their trainers and fought their way into Seoul before blowing themselves up, an episode the government concealed for decades.

Now, as Kim's grandson, Kim Jong-un, accelerates his nuclear missile programme, South Korea is again targeting the North's leadership. A day after North Korea conducted its sixth — and by far most powerful — nuclear test this month, the South Korean defence minister, Song Young-moo, told lawmakers in Seoul that a special forces brigade defence officials described as a "decapitation unit" would be established by the end of the year.

The unit has not been assigned to literally decapitate North Korean leaders. But that is clearly the menacing message South Korea is trying to send.

Defence officials said the unit could conduct cross-border raids with retooled helicopters and transport planes that could penetrate North Korea at night.

Rarely does a government announce a strategy to assassinate a head of state, but South Korea wants to keep the North on edge and nervous about the consequences of further developing its nuclear arsenal. At the same time, the South's increasingly aggressive posture is meant to help push North Korea into accepting President Moon Jae-in's offer of talks.

It is a difficult balancing act, pitting Moon's preference for a diplomatic solution against his nation's need to answer an existential question: How can a country without nuclear weapons deter a dictator who has them?

"The best deterrence we can have, next to having our own nukes, is to make Kim Jong-un fear for his life," said Shin Won-sik, a three-star general who was the South Korean military's top operational strategist before he retired in 2015.

The measures have also raised questions about whether South Korea and the United States, the South's most important ally, are laying the groundwork to kill or incapacitate Kim and his top aides before they can even order an attack.

While Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has said the United States does not seek leadership change in North Korea, and the South Koreans say the new military tactics are meant to offset the North Korean threat, the capabilities they are building could be used pre-emptively.

Last week, President Donald Trump agreed to lift payload limits under a decades-old treaty, allowing South Korea to build more powerful ballistic missiles. The United States helped South Korea build its first ballistic missiles in the 1970s, but in return, imposed restrictions to try to prevent a regional arms race.

"We can now build ballistic missiles that can slam through deep underground bunkers where Kim Jong-un would be hiding," Shin said. "The idea is how we can instil the kind of fear a nuclear weapon would — but do so without a nuke. In the medieval system like North Korea, Kim Jong-un's life is as valuable as hundreds of thousands of ordinary people whose lives would be threatened in a nuclear attack."

Although a majority of South Koreans, especially conservative politicians and commentators, call for arming their country with nuclear weapons of its own, Moon has repeatedly vowed to rid the Korean

Peninsula of such weapons. In June, Trump reiterated Washington's nuclear-umbrella doctrine, promising to protect the South with "the full range of United States military capabilities, both conventional and nuclear."

But after North Korea tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July, including one that appeared capable of hitting the United States' mainland, South Koreans are not so sure the United States would follow through.

"Would the Americans intervene in a war on the peninsula if their own Seattle were threatened with a North Korean nuclear ICBM?" said Park Hwee-rhak, a military analyst at Kookmin University in Seoul.

Moon has vowed to expand the defence budget to 2.9 percent of South Korea's gross domestic product during his term, from 2.4 percent, or \$35.4 billion, as of this year. For next year, his government has proposed a budget of \$38.1 billion, nearly \$12 billion of it for weapons to defend against North Korea.

In a Twitter post last Tuesday, Trump said, "I am allowing Japan & South Korea to buy a substantially increased amount of highly sophisticated military equipment from the United States."

South Korea has now introduced three arms-buildup programmes — Kill Chain; the Korea Air and Missile Defence programme; and the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation initiative, which includes the decapitation unit.

Under the Kill Chain programme, South Korea aims to detect impending missile attacks from North Korea and launch pre-emptive strikes.

North Korea keeps artillery and rocket tubes near the border, and is capable of delivering 5,200 rounds on Seoul in the first 10 minutes of war, military planners in South Korea say. The North also operates hundreds of missiles designed to hit South Korea and US bases in Japan and beyond to deter US intervention should war break out.

The need to detect an impending strike has become more critical. North Korea has made its nuclear bombs small and light enough — weighing under 500 kilogrammes, or about 1,100 pounds — to be fitted onto its missiles, though it is still unclear whether they are fully weaponised, Song, the defence minister, said last week.

But detection has also become harder.

North Korea hides missiles in its many underground tunnels. Switching to solid fuel has made some of its missiles easier to transport and faster to launch. In recent years, North Korea also has flight-tested missiles from submarines, which are tougher to detect.

And the potential consequences of accurate detection are huge.

Miscalculation could prompt an unwarranted pre-emptive strike, which could start a regional nuclear war. Speaking to a US congressional hearing in June, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr, said, "We will see casualties, unlike anything we've seen in 60 or 70 years."

Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities are crucial, said Daniel A. Pinkston, a defence expert at the Seoul campus of Troy University. Without those capabilities, "they would be 'shooting blind' because the missile units could not identify the targets," he added.

Last month, South Korea said it would launch five spy satellites into orbit from 2021 to 2023 to better monitor weapons movements in North Korea. In the interim, it is talking with countries like France and Israel to lease spy satellites. It also plans to introduce four U.S. RQ-4 Global Hawk surveillance drones by next year.

If pre-emptive attacks failed, South Korea would hope its Korea Air and Missile Defence would shoot down any rockets from the North.

South Korea is planning to upgrade its PAC-2 interceptor missiles for a better low-altitude defence. Last week, South Korea helped the US military instal a THAAD missile-defence battery, which intercepts enemy rockets at higher altitudes. For additional protection, South Korea is developing its own L-SAM interceptor missiles, as well as installing more early warning radars for ballistic missiles.

After the North's latest nuclear test, South Korea fired its Hyunmoo-2 short-range ballistic missiles in a drill simulating an attack on the North's test site. In July, the South's military also released simulated images of Taurus bunker-buster missiles hitting the defence ministry in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang. South Korea is buying 260 Taurus missiles from a German and Swedish joint venture.

The weapons are part of the Korea Massive Punishment and Retaliation plan. Under that program, South Korea would try to divide Pyongyang into several districts and wipe out the area where Kim is believed to be hiding, defence analysts said.

Washington's decision to lift the missile payload limits may allow South Korea to develop new Hyunmoo missiles capable of destroying weapons sites and leadership bunkers deep underground, said Shin Jong-woo at Korea Defence Forum, a Seoul-based network of military experts.

Shin said there was talk of building a Hyunmoo with a 2-tonne warhead.

The earlier restrictions barred South Korea from attaching a payload weighing more than half a ton to its Hyunmoo missile when the rocket had a range of up to 497 miles.

As word of South Korea's new assassination plans has spread, Kim has used his deputies' cars as decoys to move from place to place, South Korean intelligence officials told lawmakers in June.

Still, many say they doubt that the threat is enough to deter Kim. Only the prospect of nuclear retaliation will suffice, they say.

"The balance of terror is the shortest cut to deterring war," Yoon Sang-hyun, a conservative opposition lawmaker, told South Korea's Parliament last Tuesday.

Choe Sang Hun

The New York Times

* The Independent Online. Thursday 14 September 2017 11:03 BST:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-crisis-latest-south-decapitation-unit-hit-squad-kim-jong-un-assassination-attempt-moon-a7945961.html>

US warns of military option if North Korea nuclear and missile tests continue

UN ambassador and national security adviser float possibility if new sanctions fail: 'We have been kicking the can down the road and we're out of road.'

The US has warned it could revert to military options if new sanctions fail to curb North Korean missile and nuclear tests, after Pyongyang fired a missile over Japan for the second time in two weeks.

The US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, and the national security advisor, HR McMaster, told reporters that the latest set of UN sanctions – imposed earlier this week after North Korea's sixth nuclear test – would need time to take effect, but they suggested that after that, the US would consider military action.

"What is different about this approach is: we're out of time, right?" McMaster said on Friday. "We have been kicking the can down the road and we're out of road. For those who have been commenting about the lack of a military option – there is a military option. Now, it's not what we prefer to do, so what we have to do is call on all nations to do everything we can to address this global problem, short of war."

Haley said the North Korea issue could soon become a matter for the Pentagon and the defence secretary, James Mattis.

"We try to push through as many diplomatic options that we can," the ambassador said, but she noted that Monday's UN security council sanctions, which capped petrol and oil exports to the regime and banned textile imports, had not deterred Pyongyang from launching a second intermediate range ballistic missile in two weeks over Japanese territory and into the Pacific.

In a unanimous statement late on Friday, the UN Security Council said it "strongly condemned" the missile launch, but did not threaten further sanctions on Pyongyang.

The missile flew further than any missile tested by the regime, triggering emergency sirens and text alerts minutes before it passed over the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido on Friday morning.

Flight data shows the missile travelled higher and further than the one involved in the 29 August flyover of Japan, suggesting the regime is continuing to make advances in its missile and nuclear weapons programmes.

A new UN security council session was called on Friday to address North Korean defiance, but Haley said there was little more that UN measures could do to change Pyongyang's behaviour.

"It will take a little bit of time but it has already started to take effect," she said. "But what we see is that they continue to be provocative, they continue to be reckless and at that point, there is not a whole lot the security council is going to be able to do from here, when you've cut 90% of their trade and 30% of the oil. So having said that, I have no problem kicking this to Gen Mattis, because I think he has plenty of options."

However, when he was asked about a possible US military response, Mattis said: "I don't want to talk about that yet."

He said the North Korean launch was a "reckless act" which had "put millions of Japanese in duck and cover".

Many strategic analysts argue there is no feasible military option for curtailing North Korean nuclear and missile development, as any pre-emptive attack would be likely to trigger a devastating barrage on Seoul, without any guarantee that all Pyongyang's missiles and nuclear weapons would be put out of action.

The US secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, put the onus on Beijing and Moscow to implement the agreed sanctions to the limit.

"China supplies North Korea with most of its oil. Russia is the largest employer of North Korean forced labour," Tillerson said in a statement. "China and Russia must indicate their intolerance for these reckless missile launches by taking direct actions of their own."

North Korea will be a focus of next week's international summit at the UN general assembly, but China's Xi Jinping and Russia's Vladimir Putin will not be attending.

Japan has warned North Korea it risked having no "bright future" and called for an emergency meeting of the UN security council after Pyongyang launched a ballistic missile over Japanese territory for the second time in just over two weeks.

Shinzo Abe, the Japanese prime minister, called the launch "absolutely unacceptable". He said the recent UN resolution banning North Korean textile exports and capping the supply of oil to the country "showed the international community's unified strong will for a peaceful solution. But despite that, North Korea has again carried out this outrageous conduct."

He told reporters shortly after arriving back in Tokyo from a trip to India: "Now is the time when the international community is required to unite against North Korea's provocative acts, which threaten world peace. We must make North Korea understand that if it continues down this road, it will not have a bright future."

The Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Beijing objected to North Korea's latest launch but believed diplomacy was the only way to solve the "complicated, sensitive and grim" problem.

"The top priority is now to prevent any provocative acts," Hua told reporters.

But Hua rejected the theory - advanced, among others, by Trump and Theresa May, the British prime minister - that Beijing held the key to thwarting Kim Jong-un's nuclear and missile ambitions.

"China is not the focus. China is not the driving force behind the escalating situation. And China is not the key to resolving the issue," Hua said.

Hua said China had already made "great sacrifices" and "paid a high price" in its bid to help rein in Pyongyang: "China's willingness and its efforts to fulfill its relevant international responsibilities cannot be questioned."

In an online editorial, the Communist party-controlled Global Times newspaper said it was the US and South Korea, not China, that needed "to guide North Korea into a new strategic direction" through dialogue.

"An isolated North Korea will be more rational if the international society treats it in a rational way," argued the newspaper, which sometimes reflects official views. It said attempts to intimidate North Korea with threats or shows of force would fail.

Julian Borger in Washington, **Justin McCurry** in Tokyo and **Tom Phillips** in Beijing

* The Guardian. Friday 15 September 2017 20.51 BST Last modified on Friday 15 September 2017 22.22 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/15/north-korea-us-military-option-nuclear-tests>

US must stop North Korea threats, says China, as Kim Jong-un aims for military 'equilibrium'

Chinese ambassador says America needs to do 'much more' to achieve cooperation as Kim Jong-un speaks of goal of equalling US military might.

The United States must stop threatening North Korea's leader if a peaceful solution to the nuclear crisis is to be found, China's ambassador to Washington has said, as Kim Jong-un reiterated his country's aim to reach military "equilibrium" with the US.

Cui Tiankai told reporters in Washington: "They [the US] should refrain from issuing more threats. They should do more to find effective ways to resume dialogue and negotiation."

"Honestly, I think the United States should be doing ... much more than now, so that there's real effective international cooperation on this issue."

North Korea's state news agency, KCNA on Saturday quoted Kim as saying: "Our final goal is to establish the equilibrium of real force with the US and make the US rulers dare not talk about military option."

The US warned on Friday it could revert to military options if the latest sanctions fail to curb North Korean missile and nuclear tests, after Pyongyang fired a missile over Japan for the second time in two weeks.

US national security advisor HR McMaster said: "We have been kicking the can down the road and we're out of road. For those who have been commenting about the lack of a military option - there is a military option. Now, it's not what we prefer to do, so what we have to do is call on all nations to do everything we can to address this global problem, short of war."

Earlier, the US secretary of state, Rex Tillerson urged Russia and China to "indicate their intolerance for these reckless missile launches by taking direct actions of their own".

The Chinese ambassador was speaking after Pyongyang fired a missile over Japan for the second time in two weeks a move the UN security council said it "strongly condemned".

Speaking in Beijing, a foreign ministry spokeswoman said China opposed the launch but also urged the US to change its tactics towards Pyongyang. "China is not to blame for the escalation of tensions. China does not hold the key to resolving the Korean peninsula nuclear issue, either. Those who tied the knots are responsible for untying [them]."

The North Korea issue is likely to take centre stage during Donald Trump's anticipated state visit to

China in November.

For months Trump has been struggling to convince Beijing to do more to help him rein in Kim's regime, using a mixture of public flattery and Twitter diplomacy in his bid to win over the Chinese president, Xi Jinping.

"North Korea is a rogue nation which has become a great threat and embarrassment to China, which is trying to help but with little success," Trump tweeted on 3 September after Pyongyang's sixth nuclear test.

Zhao Tong, a North Korea expert at Beijing's Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy, said it was too early to tell how the issue might affect Trump's visit. "Many things can happen between now and then. New developments can emerge that seriously change the calculations," he said.

However, Zhao said it was almost certain Kim would continue his campaign in the lead-up to Trump's arrival. "We are likely to see more tests, maybe including another nuclear tests ... It won't take long before the North Koreans really feel the pain [from the recent UN sanctions]. So I think the North Korean strategy is to use this very short time before they face real problems domestically, to completely conclude their nuclear and missile programs, to achieve all of the key technologies ... So they are likely accelerate and to conduct the tests that are most important for them and then quickly soften their position and come to diplomacy."

The US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, echoed McMaster's strong rhetoric, even as she said Washington's preferred resolution to the crisis was through diplomacy and sanctions. "What we are seeing is, they are continuing to be provocative, they are continuing to be reckless and at that point there's not a whole lot the security council is going to be able to do from here, when you've cut 90% of the trade and 30% of the oil," Haley said.

Trump said he was "more confident than ever that our options in addressing this threat are both effective and overwhelming". Speaking from Joint Base Andrews near Washington he said North Korea "has once again shown its utter contempt for its neighbours and for the entire world community".

Russia's UN ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, said the US needed to begin talks with North Korea, something that Washington has so far ruled out. "We called on our US partners and others to implement political and diplomatic solutions that are provided for in the resolution," Nebenzia told reporters after the security council meeting. "Without implementing this, we also will consider it as a non-compliance with the resolution."

Asked about the prospect for direct talks, a White House spokesman said: "As the president and his national security team have repeatedly said, now is not the time to talk to North Korea."

South Korean president Moon Jae-in also said dialogue with the North was impossible at this point. He ordered officials to analyse and prepare for possible new North Korean threats, including electromagnetic pulse and biochemical attacks.

The US and South Korea are technically still at war with North Korea because the 1950-53 Korean conflict ended with a truce and not a peace treaty. The North accuses the US, which has 28,500 troops in South Korea, of planning to invade and regularly threatens to destroy it and its Asian allies.

Tom Phillips in Beijing and agencies

Reuters contributed to this report

* The Guardian. Saturday 16 September 2017 02.39 BST:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/16/us-must-stop-north-korea-threats-says-china-kim-jong-un-military-equilibrium>

Russia condemns Trump administration's 'aggressive rhetoric'

'In Russia we are deeply concerned about these provocative launches which are further stoking tensions'.

Russia has condemned North Korea's latest missile test over mainland Japan, but also criticised the administration of Donald Trump for its "aggressive" role in the crisis.

Russia's foreign ministry condemned North Korea's test as "illegal". But it added: "Regrettably, aggressive rhetoric is the only thing coming from Washington."

The Kremlin said on Friday that North Korea's latest missile test was part of a series of unacceptable provocations and that the United Nations Security Council was united in believing such launches should not be taking place.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov made the comments to reporters on a conference call after Pyongyang fired a missile that flew over Japan's northern Hokkaido far out into the Pacific Ocean on Friday, deepening tension after its recent test of its most powerful nuclear bomb.

"In Russia we are deeply concerned about these provocative launches which are further stoking tensions. Clearly demonstrating that our position is that such launches are unacceptable is the most tangible thing we can do right now," said Peskov.

"Judging by the United Nations' Security Council, that is a unanimous point of view which unites Security Council members."

Mr Peskov also said that President Vladimir Putin was expected to attend the Zapad-2017 military exercises on Monday and would observe the war games from a command centre near St Petersburg.

The war games have stirred unease in some countries because Russian troops and military hardware will be training inside Belarus, a Russian ally which borders Ukraine as well as Nato member states Poland, Latvia and Lithuania.

Mr Peskov said that Putin had held a phone call with French President Emmanuel Macron earlier on Friday. He did not provide further details.

China's foreign ministry has condemned North Korea's latest missile launch and is calling for all sides to seek dialogue to reduce tensions.

Spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters Friday that the situation on the Korean Peninsula following Friday's longest-ever test flight of a ballistic missile remains "complex, sensitive and severe."

Hua urged all parties to avoid actions that might inflame the situation, while adding that China,

North Korea's chief economic partner and diplomatic ally, did not hold the key to resolving the issue.

Hua said: "What is pressing now is that all sides should immediately halt their dangerous and provocative actions and words that escalate the tension."

China, one of five permanent veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council, agreed to the latest sanctions that cap fuel exports, ban textile sales and forbid countries from issuing new work permits to North Korean workers.

Independent staff and agencies

Additional reporting by agencies

* The Independent Online.Friday 15 September 2017 12:06 BST109:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/north-korea-missile-launch-russia-trump-putin-us-white-house-aggressive-rhetoric-a7948071.html>

North Korea has been saying that it might put its nuclear weapons and missiles on the negotiating table

NORTH KOREA KEEPS SAYING IT MIGHT GIVE UP ITS NUCLEAR WEAPONS – BUT MOST NEWS OUTLETS WON'T TELL YOU THAT

THE CURRENT PHASE of the decades-long U.S.-North Korea standoff began this past July 4, when North Korea launched its first genuine intercontinental ballistic missile. In a statement, North Korea's dictator Kim Jong-un called it "a gift for the American bastards."

Then, on August 8, President Donald Trump terrifyingly declared that "North Korea best not make any more threats to the United States. They will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen." [1] Two days later, he said, "Maybe that statement wasn't tough enough" [2] and tweeted that "military solutions are now fully in place, locked and loaded." [3]

Meanwhile, North Korea explained that it was examining its options "for making an enveloping fire at the areas around Guam," a U.S. territory [4]. Kim later walked this peculiar provocation back, at least for the moment.

But here's what you don't know, unless you're an obsessive North Korea-watcher:

Also starting on July 4, North Korea has been saying over and over again that it might put its nuclear weapons and missiles on the negotiating table if the United States would end its own threatening posture.

This fact has been completely obscured by U.S. and other western media. For the most part, newspapers and television have simply ignored North Korea's position. When they haven't ignored it, they've usually misrepresented it as its opposite - i.e., claiming that North Korea is saying that it will never surrender its nuclear weapons under any circumstances. And on the rare occasions when North Korea's statements are mentioned accurately, they're never given the prominence they

deserve.

North Korea's proclamations have been closely tracked by Robert Carlin [5], currently a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Cooperation and formerly head of the Northeast Asia Division in the State Department's intelligence arm. Carlin has visited North Korea over 30 times.

Via email, Carlin described how it is difficult but critical to accurately decode North Korean communications. "Observers dismiss as unimportant what the North Koreans say," Carlin writes, and "therefore don't read it carefully, except of course if it is colorful, fiery language that makes for lovely headlines. Some of what the North says is simply propaganda and can be read with one eye closed. Other things are written and edited very carefully, and need to be read very carefully. And then, having been read, they need to be compared with past statements, and put in context."

With that in mind, here's Kim's statement on July 4:

*"[T]he DPRK would neither put its nukes and ballistic rockets on the table of negotiations in any case nor flinch even an inch from the road of bolstering the nuclear force chosen by itself **unless the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat to the DPRK are definitely terminated.** [emphasis added]"*

That formulation again appeared in an August 7 government statement after the United Nations Security Council passed new sanctions on North Korea. The same day, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho also said it during a speech at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional forum in the Philippines.

And on August 22 at the UN Conference on Disarmament in Switzerland, North Korean diplomat Ju Yong-chol made exactly the same point, stating [6], "As long as the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat remains unchallenged, the DPRK will never place its self-defensive nuclear deterrence on the negotiating table."

In the past, North Korea has pledged to renounce its nuclear weapons program. During the so-called six-party talks in 2005, all the nations involved, including North Korea, affirmed that North Korea was "committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs." Meanwhile, the United States and North Korea agreed to "respect each other's sovereignty, exist peacefully together, and take steps to normalize their relations." [7]

Then the situation soured. Carlin writes that more recently "the routine formula in lower level media commentaries was that the nuclear deterrent was 'not a mere bargaining chip to put on the table for negotiations with the United States.'" [8]

So all of this seems quite clear and straightforward. North Korea is again telling the world that it is willing to consider renouncing its nuclear weapons program. Obviously Kim's regime may not be telling the truth, especially given the fact that it has violated prior agreements. But the U.S. has flagrantly violated those agreements as well [9]. The only way to find out whether there's a path to North Korean disarmament is to honestly engage with them about it.

There are huge roadblocks to that happening, and one of the biggest is the western media's failure simply to inform their audience of the basics of what's happening.

Since July 4, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* have published hundreds of articles about North Korea. Both papers have informed their readers that Kim has called Americans "bastards." But they've each only published one story quoting Kim's key caveat, that North Korea will consider

giving up its nukes if “the U.S. hostile policy and nuclear threat to the DPRK are definitely terminated.” And in both cases, the Post and Times simply reprinted an AP story — in which Kim’s words appear in the 23rd paragraph – rather than running pieces of their own.

Much the same is true for Ri Yong-ho’s Manila speech. The main *Post* story is headlined [10], “North Korea says it won’t give up nuclear weapons and that entire U.S. mainland is within firing range.” The text tells readers the same thing:

“North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told diplomats that his country will never negotiate away what he called a rational “strategic option” against the threat of attack from the United States.

“We will, under no circumstances, put the nukes and ballistic rockets” up for negotiation, Ri said in prepared remarks, adding that the entire United States is within range of its missiles.”

The *Times* quoted Ri more fully [11], but according to Carlin, relied on an incorrect North Korean government translation of Ri’s words into English [12]. That translation made it appear that Ri was saying that North Korea was only willing to consider halting further development of its nuclear program, not giving it up entirely.

The *Post* barely mentioned Ju Yong-chol’s remarks in Switzerland, simply running an AP article quoting him as saying that the U.S. is trying to “shift the blame for the tense situation on the Korean Peninsula to DPRK.”

For its part, the *Times* did run a brief Reuters article citing the most significant part of Ju’s statement. However, its impact was likely lessened by its false headline: “North Korea Will Never Surrender Nuclear Arms, Says Envoy.”

Coverage in other publications has tended to be, if anything, shoddier, with television coverage worst of all. The BBC World Service soberly explained on August 15 that “North Korea says its nuclear program can never be on the negotiating table and that’s where the standoff is.” [13] Other outlets have generally maintained a discreet silence about North Korea’s position.

Taken in total, the media’s performance on North Korea so far is an extremely ominous development. We know because of the Iraq War that newspapers and TV can provide a key assist in launching catastrophic U.S. wars. As things stand now, it’s by no means impossible that they will do it again.

Jon Schwarz

* The Intercept. August 25 2017, 8:03 p.m.:

<https://theintercept.com/2017/08/25/north-korea-keeps-saying-it-might-give-up-its-nuclear-weapons-but-most-news-outlets-wont-tell-you-that/>

North Korea missiles ‘now capable of hitting Guam’

Range of latest test ‘significant’ as it shows Pyongyang’s ballistic missiles could reach US Pacific island territory, say experts.

The ballistic missile launched by North Korea was capable of reaching the US territory of Guam, according to scientists and defence chiefs.

Fired over northern Japan into the Pacific Ocean, it travelled 2,300 miles (3,700 km) in 19 minutes, according to the South Korean military.

Pyongyang has previously threatened to attack Guam, the tiny island which is home to a US military base, 2,110 miles from North Korea.

Experts said the range of the missile, the latest act of aggression against a neighbour and key Western ally, was "significant".

"It flew a distance that is more than enough to reach Guam," said Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera.

Physicist David Wright, co-director of the Union of Concerned Scientists' global security programme, agreed.

But he pointed out "the payload the missile was carrying is not known".

He said: "The range of this test was significant since North Korea demonstrated that it could reach Guam with this missile, although."

He added the missile "very likely has low enough accuracy" that North Korea would be unable to destroy the US Anderson air base on Guam.

It comes within weeks of a similar ballistic missile launch by the secretive communist state, which its leader Kim Jong-un described as "a meaningful prelude to containing Guam".

Both are thought to have involved Hwasong-12 intermediate-range missiles fired from Pyongyang's international airport in Sunan.

The North American Aerospace Defence Command and the US Pacific Command said the missile posed no threat to North America or Guam.

The Japanese government said the missile passed over Hokkaido island and the country's military did not try to shoot it down.

The US military also said it had detected an intermediate-range ballistic missile, with Defence Secretary Jim Mattis saying the projectile "put millions of Japanese into duck and cover".

Japan issued a nationwide alert that urged residents in the country's north to take shelter, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters he condemned the attack in the strongest possible terms.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged China and Russia to take direct action against North Korea in response to its latest missile launch.

North Korea, which also sparked a global outcry with its most powerful nuclear detonation yet earlier this month, has vowed to continue tests amid what it describes as Western hostility.

Pyongyang has called on the US to withdraw tens of thousands of troops from Japan and South Korea.

Chris Baynes

* The Independent Online. Friday 15 September 2017 09:00 BST:

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/north-korea-missiles-guam-japan-us-territory-pacific-ocean-island-pyongyang-military-base-donald-a7947741.html>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/08/08/remarks-president-trump-briefing-opioid-crisis>

[2] <https://www.cnn.com/2017/08/10/trump-maybe-fire-and-fury-statement-on-north-korea-wasnt-tough-enough.html>

[3] <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/895970429734711298>

[4] <http://english.yonhapnews.co.kr/news/2017/08/09/0200000000AEN20170809001051315.html>

[5] <http://www.38north.org/2017/08/rcarlin080817/>

[6] <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-missiles-envoy/north-korea-will-never-surrender-nuclear-arms-says-envoy-idUSKCN1B21C5>

[7] <https://www.state.gov/p/eap/regional/c15455.htm>

[8] <http://www.38north.org/2017/08/rcarlin080817/>

[9] ESSF (article 41997), [Bad History - On US-North Korea Nuclear Diplomacy and Negotiations](#).

[10] https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/north-korea-under-no-circumstances-will-give-up-its-nuclear-weapons/2017/08/07/33b8d319-fbb2-4559-8f7d-25e968913712_story.html?utm_term=.bdea7a459b9e

[11] <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/07/world/asia/north-korea-responds-sanctions-united-states.html?mcubz=0>

[12] <https://minbane.wordpress.com/2017/08/07/httpwp-mep1xtjg-5d1/>

[13] <http://ln.tveyes.com/transcript.asp?StationID=110&DateTime=08%2f15%2f2017+03%3a05%3a16&Dur=302&PlayClip=true>