

Donald Trump's five-nation trip to Asia - "We have one problem. That's called North Korea,"

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North Korea looms large as Donald Trump embarks on Asia trip

US president reiterates his threats to Pyongyang as he visits five nations in 11 days on regional tour.

Donald Trump's five-nation trip to Asia may take him away from his battles with opponents and prosecutors in Washington, but it will inject his volatile, combative personality into the heart of the most dangerous nuclear standoff in the world.

The president has broken precedent by clearly and repeatedly threatening to carry out a first strike against North Korea. On the eve of his Sunday departure, he did it again.

"We have one problem. That's called North Korea," Trump told Fox News. "I must tell you North Korea's a thing that I think we will solve and if we don't solve it, it's not going to be very pleasant for them. It's not going to be very pleasant for anybody."

As with previous threats of "fire and fury", being "locked and loaded" and ready to "totally destroy" North Korea, Trump did not elaborate, but the comments were made in the context of significant escalation on both sides. North Korea carried out its sixth nuclear test in September, most probably of a thermonuclear bomb, marking a significant step up in its capabilities. It has tested intercontinental ballistic missiles over the summer.

The US has boosted military exercises with its partners and for the first time in a decade, it has three aircraft carriers and their battle groups in the region.

The buildup has led to fears across the region that both sides could stumble into war. Pyongyang's greatest fear is of a "decapitation strike" that would seek to kill Kim Jong-un and his top leadership before they have the chance to launch either nuclear weapons or a conventional bombardment on Seoul and US bases in the region.

There is a belief, widespread among analysts of North Korea, that Kim will choose to go down “all guns blazing”, unleashing destruction on the region if he thinks he is under imminent threat. He may even have set up a “dead hand” mechanism, by which an order for a nuclear launch is automatic in the event of his death.

Certain elements of recent US-led exercises are likely to deepen North Korean fears. B-1B bombers have flown off the country’s coast, north of the demilitarized zone (DMZ) for the first time since the end of the cold war. And the USS Michigan, a guided missile submarine, docked at the South Korean base at Busan, equipped with special pods on its deck of a type used for Navy Seal mini-submarines.

The last time the Michigan came to Busan, six months earlier, the South Korean news agency Yonhap quoted military sources as saying that it was carrying Navy Seals on joint wargames with their South Korean counterparts, to practise operations to “remove the North’s war command”.

The US navy did not respond to a request for comment, but it has said in the past that it does not train for decapitation raids. The South Korean government, however, has announced that it hopes to have its own special forces “decapitation unit” in place by the end of the year.

Trump’s 11-day trip is intended to be about much more than North Korea. With stops in Japan, South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines, it will be the longest visit to the region by a US president since George HW Bush traveled there in 1992. Bush caught flu on that tour, and threw up in the Japanese prime minister’s lap.

On this occasion, the greater fear is that the region will have an allergic reaction to the president. There are more than 140 protests planned in Seoul, where the population is anxious that it will be the first to pay for Trump’s outbursts.

In a briefing before the trip, the US national security adviser, HR McMaster, made it clear there would be no cooling down of the president’s rhetoric, saying Trump “will use any language he wants to use”.

“I don’t think the president really modulates his language. Have you noticed him do that? I mean, he’s been very clear about it,” McMaster said.

A presidential visit to the Korean DMZ has been removed from the itinerary because, a White House official said, there is not enough time and such visits have become a cliché. Barring any provocations from Pyongyang, the most critical moment is likely to come on Wednesday when Trump addresses the South Korean assembly at a time of tense relations with the new president, Moon Jae-in.

Moon has distanced himself from Trump’s threats against Pyongyang, insisting no military action can be taken without his government’s agreement. Seoul has also been alarmed by Trump’s threats to walk away from the US-Korean trade agreement and to make South Korea pay for US missile defence systems deployed on its soil.

“A big question is how Trump will handle the North Korean issue in that speech,” said Mira Rapp-Hooper, an expert on North Korea at the Centre for New American Security. “If he does or says anything overtly critical, it will put Moon in a very difficult place.”

Alongside trade talks, North Korea will also hang over Trump’s meeting with Xi Jinping in Beijing. The president has repeatedly argued that China has the unique leverage capable of restraining Pyongyang and avoiding conflict.

Rapp-Hooper said it was unlikely the Beijing meeting would bring about a dramatic change in

Chinese policy.

“Unfortunately I think the bounds on the possible outcomes are between a disappointing nothing-burger and something quite a lot worse,” she said. “China still has the same fundamental national interests in the Korean peninsula. There may be some specific measures, but China will do nothing that it feels could possibly destabilise the regime.”

In Japan, Trump’s first stop, there is general support from Shinzo Abe’s government for his muscular policy toward North Korea, but apprehension about his unpredictability.

Michael Green, an Asia expert at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said Abe currently had low opinion ratings for his handling of the North Korea threat “and that largely is because the public’s uncertain where Donald Trump is taking North Korea policy and whether Abe-san is going along for the ride”.

“In fact, I think behind the scenes the Japanese government is asking a lot of questions about the circumstances under which the US might use force.”

Special boxes of rice crackers on sale in the Japanese parliament before Trump’s visit have a cartoon of the US president playing cards with Abe and other leaders on the box. The Japanese prime minister’s wife is warning him: “Don’t draw the joker, dear.”

Julian Borger in Washington

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<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/nov/04/north-korea-looms-large-as-donald-trump-embar-ks-on-asia-trip>

Trump in Asia: Conundrum over N Korea’s nuclear threat

Washington, DC - US President Donald Trump will seek to raise international economic and political pressure on North Korea as he visits Japan, South Korea, and China, amid nuclear tensions and rising calls for serious negotiations that the president so far has rejected.

Legislators and foreign policy analysts in the United States are watching closely to see whether Trump, on a 12-day trip to the Asia-Pacific region, continues his threatening rhetoric at Pyongyang or pivots towards diplomacy, as Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis have advocated.

“We need to support our diplomatic team in every way that we can, because short of us, collectively with China and few other countries being able to change the dynamic, we are heading to a very bad place,” Senator Bob Corker, Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told Al Jazeera.

Trump has escalated US military deployments in Northeast Asia, sending F-35s, the US’ most advanced fighter jets, to Japan. He also followed through with the deployment of a THAAD anti-missile system in South Korea, over China’s objections, and sent three aircraft carrier strike groups

to the Pacific.

'Minimalist talks'

In tweets, the president has belittled North Korea's ruler Kim Jong-un as "rocket man" and said Tillerson was "wasting his time" trying to engage in talks. Behind the scenes, the president is said to have effectively shut down US diplomatic efforts to talk to the North Koreans through the United Nations, the so-called New York channel, worrying US legislators.

"The minimalist talks that existed are breaking down. He's made it pretty clear he has no interest in keeping open a dialogue with North Korea," Senator Chris Murphy, a Connecticut Democrat and Trump critic, told Al Jazeera.

"No one has been authorised to negotiate by this administration. They need to start over with a strategy that gradually builds up political, economic, and military pressure - ultimately leading to negotiations they have been unable thus far to put together."

Pyongyang has responded to Trump with threats to test a powerful hydrogen bomb over the Pacific Ocean, and issued statements suggesting the president needs medication, calling Trump an "aged retard", famously translated in the US from Korean to English as "dotard".

The back and forth has raised alarm worldwide and underlined both Kim and Trump's unpredictability - and relative inexperience on the world stage.

South Korea President Moon Jae-in, who has sought detente with the north, has called on the US not to take any military action without South Korea's agreement. Trump has personally disparaged Moon and opened up the question of the Korea-US Free Trade Agreement, which has strategic implications.

"The president wants to be in a position that the message that Kim Jong-un receives is that there is a solid front, with no cracks in the mutual security agreement of Korea with the United States," said Don Manzullo, president of the Korea Economic Institute of the US, which supports US-Korea trade.

"Un has to realise that the world is united against him."

Trump will travel first to Japan on Sunday where he will meet with newly re-elected Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who has taken a hawkish line on North Korea, advocating at the UN for tougher sanctions and at home for a more robust Japanese military posture. Trump and Abe will hold a bilateral summit and a press conference.

"Abe seems to be a bit more of a hawk than South Korea. But ultimately, if the United States supports diplomacy, then everybody in the region supports it too because nobody wants a war," said Tom Z. Collina, director of policy for the Ploughshares Fund, a non-profit group that advocates the elimination of nuclear weapons.

"This trip is an opportunity for Trump himself to pivot towards diplomacy as the main way to solve the North Korea crisis, but he may not take it," Collina told Al Jazeera.

In advance of the president's trip, the White House announced moves designed to increase pressure on both North Korea and China.

Chinese solution?

Officials said Trump will use his meeting with China President Xi Jinping to take tougher measures against North Korea. The Treasury Department announced on Thursday it was cutting off the small Chinese Bank of Dandong from an international transaction network, alleging the bank had helped finance North Korea's missiles.

"China is part of the solution to any coherent North Korea strategy, but the strategy needs to start with alliances, and the most concerning thing is the state of the US-South Korea alliance," said Brian Harding, director for Asia-Pacific security policy at the Center for American Progress and a former Defense Department adviser in the Obama administration.

Back home in Washington, the US Congress is advancing additional financial sanctions while signaling legislators are prepared to rein in Trump's ability to launch a military attack. The key objective, they say, is getting North Korea to negotiate.

"It's important that we reassure our allies, South Korea and Japan, that we stand with them, that we are solid," Senator Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat and sponsor of a new bank sanctions bill, told Al Jazeera. "We will not accept a North Korea with nuclear weapons and we need to keep pushing. We have got to exert more pressure on North Korea."

But sanctions and military pressure are unlikely to yield results without presidential leadership from Trump on negotiations, experts say.

"You don't know what the North Koreans are up to unless you negotiate and talks are not the same thing as negotiations," said Leon V Sigal, director of the Northeast Asia Cooperative Security Project at the Social Science Resource Council in New York and author of the 1998 book, *Disarming Strangers: Nuclear Diplomacy with North Korea*.

"The US needs to put a proposal on the table to address their security needs in return for a suspension of the nuclear programmes. That's the best you can do right now," Sigal said.

William Roberts

* AL JAZEERA NEWS, 4 Nov 2017:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/trump-asia-conundrum-korea-nuclear-threat-171104121205186.html>

The Observer view on Donald Trump's tour of Asia

The American president's poor grasp of international relations, his bluster and his 'America first' rhetoric are unlikely to reap success in the face of Xi Jinping pragmatism

The phrase "bull in a china shop" might have been coined to describe this week's tour of Asia by Donald Trump. During last year's presidential election campaign, he raged against China, terming it an "enemy" and accusing Beijing of "raping" America with predatory trade practices. With characteristic insensitivity, he suggested Japan should acquire nuclear weapons and South Korea should pay more for its defence. He promised to tear up the multilateral Trans-Pacific Partnership, a promise he then fulfilled. And he vowed to eliminate the threat posed by North Korea by any means,

including military action.

Trump's behaviour in office has proved to be every bit as destabilising for the Asia-Pacific region partly because of what he has not done. His White House has singularly failed to enunciate a vision and a policy for a region that all agree is central to America's 21st-century prosperity and security. Trump claimed Barack Obama's "pivot to Asia" had failed in its primary aim of managing and channelling China's expanding geopolitical influence. But he has put nothing in its place. Long-time allies no longer know with certainty where the US stands. What Trump did do was introduce fear and confusion. His escalating war of words with Kim Jong-un, North Korea's dictator, has pushed Pyongyang into accelerating its efforts to build nuclear-armed missiles capable of striking the US mainland. Trump's threat to "totally destroy" the country conjured the spectre of nuclear war, alarming friends and foes alike. Yet Trump's acute need for Beijing's help in sanctioning Kim has drawn him into an improbably fawning relationship with Xi Jinping, China's strongman president, who he will meet. His pledge to shift the bilateral relationship radically in America's favour has given way to unhealthy obsequiousness. He recently referred to Xi as the "king of China".

Trump's lack of a clear vision, his studied ignorance of key policy issues, his vanity and gullibility, plus his tendency to fly off the handle, present his Chinese hosts with a problem. It should not be difficult to get the better, diplomatically speaking, of such a flawed interlocutor. On the other hand, sending Trump home empty-handed would be to risk more unpredictable explosions. That is why observers predict Xi will offer some high-profile but essentially cosmetic concessions on trade, to satisfy Trump's "America " agenda and allow him to boast of a big success. There may be Chinese promises to help pressure North Korea. But they will not go much beyond current measures. This is the narrow script tacitly agreed by Trump advisers.

Such an outcome would leave critical issues unaddressed that, if allowed to fester, could ultimately move US-China relations from competition to direct confrontation. One is the uncomfortable reality, for the American economy and workforce, that China continues to export three times more goods to the US than it imports. This gaping trade imbalance is highly symbolic of China's rise and America's relative fall. Another salient issue is Trump's failure to seriously tackle Chinese military expansionism in the East and South China seas or understand its negative implications for continued confidence in US backing for Japan, Taiwan, Indonesia and others.

China under Xi, who was crowned de facto leader for life at last month's Communist party congress, poses an even more fundamental challenge. Its disdain for open, democratic governance, free elections, civil rights, independent judges and freedom of speech and religion is deeply undermining of western values. Beijing's ruthless treatment of pro-democracy campaigners in Hong Kong and its persecution of dissenting writers are cases in point. Its contempt for human rights, broadly defined, defies the system of universal standards created through the UN after 1945. And it is not merely a domestic problem. Through its rising global profile and, for example, its increased use of soft power tools such as investment and peace building in South Sudan and the Horn of Africa, China is effectively exporting its governance model to the world.

A study by the Atlantic Council, a Washington thinktank, notes the Asia-Pacific region will be the world's most economically dynamic by 2050 and that regional states are already spending more than Europe on defence. A fundamental power shift is under way, it says, and the rules-based international order is fraying. The US response should be a strengthening of existing security alliances in tandem with "hard-headed engagement" with Beijing. It should promote "fundamental values" across the region, while always seeking common ground, where possible, with China. But Washington should not be in any doubt, the study says: the "Trans-Pacific Century" has begun.

Will a man like Donald Trump listen to such sensible advice? Does he even accept the premise,

namely, that the era of American dominance is ending? It's unlikely. The best that can be hoped is that Trump will forgo more verbal rampages this week and stick to the script. If, as some predict, North Korea waves a red rag and fires off another missile by way of greeting, his handlers may just have to tie him down.

Observer editorial

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<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/nov/05/observer-view-on-donald-trump-tour-of-asia-xi-jinping-north-korea>

Donald Trump's five Asia-Pacific challenges

New York City - Donald Trump's upcoming tour of Asia offers plenty to keep the US president cheerful, from lavish state banquets to honour-guard pomp and even a chummy round of golf with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

That's where the fun stops. It also represents a gruelling 12-day slog of speech-making, summits, and tricky sit-downs on a range of trade disputes - and the intractable policy headache of North Korea's nuclear arms programme.

These are big tests for a commander-in-chief who does, on occasion, follow the teleprompter and stay "on message", but at other times becomes frustrated and fires off salvos of brusque, early morning Twitter missives.

Before Air Force One takes off for a Hawaii visit on Friday, Al Jazeera picked out the key challenges facing Trump on an odyssey that starts in Japan on Sunday before stops in South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

North Korea

The way the Trump administration tells it, the totalitarian regime in Pyongyang is rapidly developing nuclear warheads and the intercontinental ballistic missiles to carry them to a US West Coast city such as Seattle or Los Angeles.

The White House counter-strategy seems to be assuring allies such as South Korea and Japan that the US still has their back, while getting North Korea's main ally, China, to economically pressure Pyongyang back to the bargaining table.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's calculus is different. Beijing-Pyongyang relations have troughed, but a collapse of the hermit nation could send refugees spilling northwards and land American troops on China's doorstep.

That's a recipe for trouble at Trump-Xi talks from November 8 onwards, Leland Miller, cofounder and CEO of China Beige Book, a data consultancy on the world's second-biggest economy, told Al Jazeera.

"Many Trump administration officials believe that Beijing has to help solve the North Korea problem.

Not be helpful, but solve the problem. And there's no easy solution to this, certainly not one that China will find acceptable and low cost," Miller said.

US-China relations

Trump's stop in Beijing is being billed as a "state visit plus" to mark the importance of the dynamic between himself and President Xi, as well as relations between the US superpower and China's fast-growing economy and armed forces.

North Korea is not the only glitch. Trump rails against the United States' "embarrassing" \$347bn trade deficit with China, and has accused Beijing of manipulating its currency, rigging markets, and pilfering ideas from US firms.

According to Miller, the two leaders may be able to paper over the cracks by unveiling a few energy deals this month, but that would only be a "calm before the storm" and the "escalation of tensions" next year.

"The Trump administration has high expectations from China, a fundamental reordering of the trade relationship, while China expects a relatively painless negotiation process," Miller said.

Meanwhile, the two leaders are in different positions. Xi has just emerged from a glowing five-yearly Communist Party congress; Trump has low approval ratings of 34 percent and is battling a probe about election collusion with Russia.

Former CIA analyst Christopher Johnson compared Xi's "strong position with no visible domestic opposition" to Trump's routinely questioned style and legislative record.

"This gives Xi a bit of a leg up" when bartering, Johnson told Al Jazeera.

New Asia-Pacific policy

Former US President Barack Obama tried to "rebalance" the US' defence and economic policy to counter China's rise, including with a 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal that excluded Beijing.

Trump scrapped TTP almost as soon as he entered the White House in January.

Amy Searight, a former Pentagon official, told Al Jazeera the "lack of any replacement with a proactive trade policy or economic agenda" has left Washington's Asian partners feeling anxious.

The property magnate is expected to unveil a new framework at the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Da Nang, Vietnam, on November 10. White House officials talk up plans for a "free and open Indo-Pacific region".

Although big questions about the policy remain, a recommitment to rules-based economic fairness may be a solid message, Lindsey Ford, a former Department of Defense official, told Al Jazeera.

"It's important for people to hear that America First does not mean Asia last; that American prosperity can go hand in hand with Asian prosperity," said Ford, an analyst at the Asia Society Policy Institute, a think-tank.

Keeping allies sweet

The first two stopovers are Washington's key allies in Northeast Asia: Japan and South Korea. They

have both been rattled by a wildcard president who threatened to upend a global order the US had underpinned for decades.

Trump has spoken of raining “fire and fury” on North Korea - rhetoric that nudges the region towards a potentially calamitous conflict. He may well tone that down a notch when addressing the National Assembly in Seoul on November 8.

He may also be wise to offer some goodies. The United States’ pull-out from TPP came as China was rolling out its multibillion-dollar “Belt and Road” infrastructure development plan across Asia and beyond.

According to Ford, the expected Asia policy must provide a new “economic vision, post-TPP”. Simply renegotiating a bilateral trade with South Korea, and vaunting new ones with Japan and Vietnam, is not enough.

Trump being Trump

Trump’s biggest challenge could be the one thing he cannot seem to change: himself.

He is prone to undiplomatic language that plays badly with buttoned-down Asian officials. Previously on Twitter, he accused South Korea of trying to “appease” its northern neighbour, and criticised Xi for not doing enough to rein in Pyongyang.

The trip is longer and tougher than his first foreign venture to the Middle East in May. He may get irked by Japanese resentment over a US military base in Okinawa, or rallies against the “war maniac” US president on the streets of South Korea.

“Among government officials, there are going to be a lot of white-knuckles and held breath throughout the two days of his time in South Korea,” Scott Snyder, a scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations, a think-tank, told Al Jazeera.

There is a risk of clashing egos when Trump meets Rodrigo Duterte, the hard-boiled president of the Philippines, on November 13. Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin will attend APEC, shifting the spotlight back on to the troublesome probe of election collusion.

China is a safer bet, said Elizabeth Economy, author of *The Third Revolution*, a book about modern China.

Thanks to a government block on Twitter, Trump’s time there could “turn out to be 36 hours of drama-free [from] tweeting,” she told Al Jazeera.

James Reinl

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* AL JAZEERA NEWS, 3 Nov 2017:

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/donald-trump-asia-pacific-challenges-171103130933273.html>

Pentagon: only ground invasion can destroy North Korean nuclear program

After a top Pentagon official said the only way to destroy North Korea's nuclear weapons program would be through a ground invasion, a senior Senate Democrat urged the secretary of state, Rex Tillerson, to "stay the course" and achieve a diplomatic solution to the crisis, in spite of President Donald Trump's unpredictable behaviour and threats of military action.

Trump himself threw a characteristic wildcard into the mix, saying he would "certainly be open" to meeting the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un.

Rear Adm Michael J Dumont of the joint staff offered his blunt assessment of US options in response to a letter from two congressional Democrats who asked about casualty assessments in any conflict with North Korea.

The US is evaluating Pyongyang's ability to target heavily populated areas of South Korea with artillery, rockets and ballistic missiles, Dumont said, adding that Seoul, the South's capital with a population of 25 million, is just 35 miles from the demilitarized zone (DMZ).

Casualties would differ depending on advance warning and the ability of US and South Korea forces to counter such attacks, Dumont said, also mentioning the possibility that chemical and biological weapons might be used by the North.

"It is the most bleak assessment," Feinstein, a member of the Senate intelligence committee, told CNN's State of the Union. "I've spent a lot of time reading the intelligence. I've had an opportunity to discuss the situation with [Defense] Secretary [James] Mattis. I believe that an outbreak of war would kill hundreds of thousands of people."

Dumont's views were made public as Trump began a visit to Asia in which North Korea and Kim Jong-un's nuclear ambition loom large. "No one, no dictator, no regime ... should underestimate American resolve," he told a military audience at Yokota airbase near Tokyo on Sunday on the first leg of his five-country trip that will also take in South Korea, China, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The president has repeatedly threatened North Korea, saying in his maiden speech at the United Nations in September he would "totally destroy" the country if necessary. He has also repeatedly undercut Tillerson in his efforts to pursue talks with the regime in Pyongyang.

Trump has also said before that he would be willing to meet Kim. In an interview with the Sinclair TV show Full Measure broadcast on Sunday morning, he said he was holding meetings with numerous Asian leaders and "would sit down with anybody."

"I don't think it's strength or weakness, I think sitting down with people is not a bad thing. So I would certainly be open to doing that but we'll see where it goes, I think we're far too early."

Feinstein said she was "very pleased that Secretary Tillerson is with the president [in Asia]. I think if he will stay the course and use diplomacy the way diplomacy can be used, that it might be possible to work something out."

Also speaking to CNN on Sunday another senior Democrat, House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, said the US should "exhaust every possible diplomatic resolution". She also said Trump's approach to North Korea was akin to "poking a stick in the eye of a mad dog".

Feinstein said she was concerned about Trump's behaviour on a high-stakes trip during which, the

president told reporters on Air Force One, he expects to meet the Russian president, Vladimir Putin. Both men are due to attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) summit in Da Nang, Vietnam.

"Everybody sees what the flaws in this president are," Feinstein said. "There's no question about it ... Can he actually stay on script?"

"I watched his remarks in Japan with respect to the military that was receiving him and I thought he did a good job. He stayed on script. It's when he goes off script, it's when he tweets, it's where he has to attack everybody if he feels even slightly aggrieved."

Feinstein also referred to Trump's comment in a Fox News interview this week that vacancies at the state department were not a concern because he was "the only one that matters".

"He isn't the only one that matters," she said. "He's the one that's there to solve problems on behalf of the United States and that's what this trip is about and I hope and trust that he sticks to that mission."

Representatives Ted Lieu of California and Ruben Gallego of Arizona wrote the original letter to Dumont. He answered: "A classified briefing would be the best place to discuss in detail the capability of the US and its allies to ... counter North Korea's ability to respond with a nuclear weapon and eliminate North Korea's nuclear weapons located in deeply buried, underground facilities."

On Saturday, 15 Democrats and one Republican member of Congress, all military veterans, called Dumont's assessment "deeply disturbing" and said such an action "could result in hundreds of thousands, or even millions of deaths in just the first few days of fighting".

In a joint statement, the lawmakers said: "It is our intent to have a full public accounting of the potential cost of war, so the American people understand the commitment we would be making as a nation if we were to pursue military action."

They also said the Trump administration "has failed to articulate any plans to prevent the military conflict from expanding beyond the Korean peninsula and to manage what happens after the conflict is over".

"With that in mind, the thought of sending troops into harm's way and expending resources on another potentially unwinnable war is chilling. The president needs to stop making provocative statements that hinder diplomatic options and put American troops further at risk."

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