

North Korean ICBM Able to Strike America? How to Avoid a Catastrophic Nuclear War

The only way to defuse tensions and avoid catastrophic war is through diplomatic outreach by Washington - an option Trump and hawkish administration generals reject.

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According to Pyongyang's KCNA news agency, "(t)he ICBM Hwasong-15 type weaponry system (test-fired Tuesday) is an intercontinental ballistic rocket tipped with super-large heavy warhead which is capable of striking the whole mainland of the US."

The ballistic missile tested exceeds the capability of previous ones. A DPRK statement said it's to defend the country against "US imperialists' nuclear blackmail policy and nuclear threat."

Its military hasn't yet demonstrated re-entry technology capability - the ability of an object in space to reenter the earth's atmosphere without incinerating.

Experts believe the DPRK is close to this expertise. It's also unknown if it's able to miniaturize a nuclear warhead enough for mounting on a ballistic missile.

Reportedly, the missile test-fired Tuesday traveled nearly 1,000 km, reaching an altitude of 4,475 km, potentially able to reach US cities. The international space station orbit at 250 miles above earth.

Defense Secretary Mattis said the missile was "higher...than any previous shot they have taken," claiming it could strike "anywhere in the world."

Trump responded tersely, saying we'll "take care of it. It is a situation that we will handle." Separately, he tweeted:

"After North Korea missile launch, it's more important than ever to fund our gov't & military!"

America's only threats are invented ones. If it waged world peace instead of endless wars, it's out-of-control military spending couldn't be justified.

Washington, South Korea and Japan called for an emergency UN Security Council meeting in response to the DPRK test.

According to Union of Concerned Scientists' co-director of its Global Security Program David Wright, a space weapons expert, if Tuesday's missile launch flew on a standard trajectory instead of a lofted angle, its range would exceed 8,000 miles.

"Such a missile would have more than enough range to reach Washington DC, and in fact any part of the continental United States," Wright explained.

North Korea vowed to continue developing its nuclear and ballistic capabilities because of threatened US aggression – these weapons considered its most effective deterrent.

During Trump's Asia visit, a DPRK statement said

"(a)s long as the US and its puppets engage in hostile acts and invasive attempts against us, and as long as imperialism, the root of evil and injustice, is left on Earth, we will further build up our nuclear power."

Reckless US brinksmanship on the Korean peninsula, ruling out diplomacy, risks unthinkable regional nuclear war.

Pyongyang's response to threats by Trump, other US officials and regional ones is greater determination to develop its nuclear and ballistic missile expertise.

The only way to defuse tensions and avoid catastrophic war is through diplomatic outreach by Washington – an option Trump and hawkish administration generals reject.

The Korean peninsula remains a hugely dangerous tinderbox. Nuclear war remains an ominous possibility, a likely uncontrollable firestorm if launched.

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My newest book as editor and contributor is titled "Flashpoint in Ukraine: How the US Drive for Hegemony Risks WW III."

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