

Sanctions and Threats against North Korea. “All Options are on the Table”

US Ban Prohibiting Travel to North Korea Violates Both U.S. Constitution and U.S. Obligations as a Party to the DPRK Sanctions Resolutions

By [Carla Stea](#)

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In a press briefing on Monday, ending China's July Presidency of the UN Security Council, Chinese Ambassador Liu stated the firm Chinese position that the United Nations resolutions sanctioning the DPRK require all parties, not only the DPRK, to refrain from threats exacerbating tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and require all parties to engage in dialogue and negotiations to resolve the inflammatory situation in Northeast Asia.

The new U.S. travel ban, which takes effect on September 1, preventing U.S. citizens from traveling to the DPRK, is in direct and flagrant violation of the sanctions resolution requiring all parties to engage in dialogue: this unconstitutional U.S. travel ban intends precisely the opposite – escalating hostility and crushing the rich opportunity for understanding provided by direct person-to-person exchanges, which reduce deadly fear and prejudice between peoples. It is not only the DPRK that is allegedly violating U.N. resolutions by testing nuclear weapons, it is also the U.S. that is in violation of these resolutions by aggressively prohibiting dialogue between U.S. citizens and the citizens of North Korea. Resolution 1718 explicitly “encourages further the efforts by all States concerned to intensify their diplomatic efforts, to refrain from any actions that might aggravate tension.”

Repeated U.S. threats that: “all options are on the table” obviously referring to military intervention, greatly exacerbate tensions, and are provocations motivating the DPRK to increase its efforts to protect itself militarily, especially with advanced nuclear weapons. U.S. threats provoke a vicious spiral of violence, and the possibility cannot be excluded that this is intentional. The U.S. placement of THAAD missiles in the Republic of Korea destabilizes China and Russia, and is a thinly disguised assault on the national security of both these countries. And the US-ROK military exercises this month constitute an existential threat to the survival of North Korea, and raise the level of tension in the area to a tipping point intolerable to the DPRK.

Aside from the fact that this U.S. travel ban is also a brazen violation of the United States Constitution, an infringement upon the First Amendment right of freedom of association, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press, this prohibition of United States citizens' right to travel has no justification, whatsoever, and is intended deliberately to tighten the noose strangling the economy of the DPRK.

Last week the New York Times quoted numerous U.S. citizens who had traveled to the DPRK and attested to the complete safety of travel to North Korea. As usual, the U.S. will exploit the tragic death of Otto Warmbier in an effort to claim that its travel ban is intended to protect U.S. citizens. This is preposterous. United States tourists, businessmen, journalists, politicians traveling in various countries throughout the world, have occasionally (and in some places frequently) been arrested, kidnapped, tortured or murdered , and no travel ban has been enacted to prevent U.S. citizens from traveling to these often perilous areas.

There is no travel ban against any country in the Middle East or Africa, where there has been great danger to American citizens. Many American citizens, including James Foley and Steven Soloff, have been beheaded by ISIS in the Middle East, but U.S. citizens continue to enjoy unrestricted travel there. The U.S. frequently tries to justify its acts of aggression with the rationalization that it is “protecting U.S. citizens,” such as during the invasion of Grenada, which Ronald Reagan attempted to justify as “protecting” U.S. medical students studying in Grenada, despite the fact that these medical students publicly stated they were in no danger, and did not want U.S. military protection.

Any attempt to exploit the death of Otto Warmbier as “justification” for this unconstitutional travel ban is deceitful. In early 2016 the DPRK had repeatedly sought peace talks with the United States. President Obama repeatedly refused to meet with North Korea to discuss matters of urgent mutual concern. In March, 2016 Otto Warmbier was at trial in Pyongyang. If the Obama administration was sincerely concerned with Warmbier’s life, they could have urged his release during peace talks with the DPRK. They failed to do so. The DPRK was so anxious for this meeting, to discuss substantive matters, such as the sanctions and efforts to normalize relations between the US and the DPRK, that they would have undoubtedly agreed to release Warmbier, whose detention was of less significance in a much larger crisis, the ongoing war between the two countries, locked in and frozen by the “armistice.” By contrast, Bill Clinton traveled to North Korea, and successfully obtained the release of two Americans detained there.

China is correct in stating that the “problem” of North Korea can only be resolved between the United States and the DPRK, and only a peace treaty finally agreed to by these two nations will accomplish this.

Too often, Americans and Europeans fail to place current crises in historic context. One hundred years after the slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Armenians by the Turks, Armenians still feel the rage and the raw wounds of that horror. “Operation Nemesis” by Eric Bogosian describes the masterminds of the assassination of the Turkish leaders who commanded the massacre. All the assassins were ultimately acquitted of the murders, which were acknowledged as a form of justice. Seventy years after World War Two, Jews and citizens of the former Soviet Union still remember the terror of the monstrous atrocities inflicted upon them by the nazi scourge. And the Nuremberg trials imposed the death sentence upon many of the naziwar criminals. But these are Europeans and Americans.

Why have no war crimes tribunals been established to hold to account the soldiers who perpetrated massacres against the North Korean people between 1950-1953?

It is obligatory that the horror suffered by North Koreans, the murders and tortures inflicted upon them by American soldiers be acknowledged and compensated for.

Between 3 to 4 million Koreans died during the U.S. invasion between 1950-1953. Every town in North Korea was reduced to ashes, as a result of saturation bombing, napalm and germ warfare. Korean prisoners were used as human guinea pigs to test new forms of germ weaponry, in complete violation of the Geneva conventions. (See: Thomas Powell, [Biological Warfare in the Korean War: Allegations and Cover-up](#), Socialism and Democracy April 2017)

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Forgotten war, forgotten massacres—the Korean War (1950–1953) as licensed mass killings

DONG CHOON KIM

The massacre at Sinchon county is only one example of the savage obliteration of North Korea, and can never be forgotten.

“We went over there and fought the war and eventually burned down every town in North Korea anyway, someday or another, and some in South Korea too.... Over a period of three years or so, we killed off - what - twenty percent of the population of Korea as direct casualties of war, or from starvation and exposure?”

-- Curtis LeMay

Where is there a tribunal offering justice to the people of North Korea?

Why have no war reparations been made to the North Korean victims?

And how can they ever forget this agony inflicted upon them by American and South Korean soldiers, with UN collusion?

Citizens of the DPRK live with the foreboding terror of a repetition of the atrocity they were forced to endure between 1950-1953.

Ironically, on August 1, The New York Times op-ed section featured an editorial stating:

“Mr. Trump should drop the bluster and dispatch Secretary of State Rex Tillerson or some other high level envoy to explore whether there is any basis for negotiations. In May, the president raised the possibility of meeting the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, himself “under the right circumstances” to defuse tensions.....The North’s program is advanced and its leadership deeply distrustful. Talks should begin without preconditions...Are the North Koreans even interested in talks? American experts who study the issue say there have been repeated signals in recent weeks that they are. That can’t be known,

however, unless someone goes and asks them.”

And ironically, more than 10 years ago, in an astoundingly moving exercise of the Right of Reply at the [UN Security Council, on Saturday, October 14, 2006](#), North Korean Ambassador Pak Gil Yon answered every conceivable question, regarding the DPRK’s position [including nuclear weapons]:

“The delegation of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea expresses its disappointment over the fact that the Security Council finds itself incapable of saying even a word of concern to the United States, which threatens the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea with a nuclear pre-emptive attack and aggravates tension by reinforcing armed forces and conducting large-scale joint military exercises near the Korean peninsula... The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s nuclear test was entirely attributable to the United States nuclear threat, sanctions and pressure. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has exerted every possible effort to settle the nuclear issue through dialogue and negotiations, prompted by its sincere desire to realize the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. The Bush Administration, however, responded to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s patient and sincere effort and magnanimity with a policy of sanctions and blockade. The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea was compelled to substantially prove its possession of nukes to protect its sovereignty and the right to existence from the daily increasing danger of war from the United States.”

“Although the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea conducted the nuclear test due to the United States, it remains unchanged in its will to denuclearize the peninsula through dialogue and negotiations. The denuclearization of the entire peninsula was President Kim Il Sung’s last instruction and is the ultimate goal of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. ...

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea has clarified more than once that it would feel no need to possess even a single nuclear weapon once it was no longer exposed to the United States threat and after that country had dropped its hostile policy towards the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and confidence had been built between the two countries.....The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is ready for both dialogue and confrontation. If the United States persistently increases pressure upon the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, my country will continue to take physical countermeasures, considering such pressure to be a declaration of war.” (emphasis added)

North Korea’s commitment to peace was flawlessly expressed in Ambassador Pak’s statement, on behalf of the people and government of the DPRK. He presented a peace initiative both to US and the UN Security Council. Their failure to address and discuss this initiative eleven years ago was irresponsible, and has jeopardized the stability of Northeast Asia. As a result, today the fate of the world depends upon the United States’ cooperation and respect for the right of the people of the DPRK to live securely in an economic system of their own choosing.

The first step will be dialogue and engagement. And this requires person-to-person encounters at the highest levels of government, as well as “citizen diplomacy.” It is imperative that the unconstitutional United States travel ban perpetuating groundless fear and prejudice must be immediately removed.

Carla Stea is Global Research’s correspondent at United Nations Headquarters, New York,

N.Y.

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About the author:

Author and Geopolitical analyst Carla Stea is Global Research's Correspondent at United Nations headquarters, New York, NY.

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