



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 8, 2018

Pence Says U.S. Will Soon Unveil “Toughest” Round of Sanctions on North Korea

Speaking at a joint press conference with  Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo on February 7, the day before his visit to South Korea, Vice President Pence said that the United States will soon announce the “toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever.”

“We will continue to intensify our maximum pressure campaign until North Korea takes concrete steps toward complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization,” Pence said.

“To that end, I’m announcing today the United States of America will soon unveil the toughest and most aggressive round of economic sanctions on North Korea ever. And we will continue to isolate North Korea until it abandons its nuclear and ballistic missile program once and for all.”

Pence declined to offer specifics on exactly what the new package of sanctions would consist of. Whatever sanctions are planned, however, those who value American independence and sovereignty will hope that they are implemented unilaterally, and not by means of the UN or one of its affiliated agencies. Such entangling relationships can never be in our own interests.

Pence also warned against allowing North Korea to use the Olympics for propaganda purposes.

“We will not allow North Korean propaganda to hijack the message and imagery of the Olympic Games,” the vice president continued. “We will not allow North Korea to hide behind the Olympic banner the reality that they enslave their people and threaten the wider region,” he added.

Pence will head the U.S. government delegation visiting the Olympics’ opening ceremony at Pyeongchang, South Korea. In a statement, Pence’s deputy chief of staff Jarrod Agen explained the reasoning behind the vice president’s presence at the Olympics:

The Vice President is traveling to the Olympic Games in South Korea to reinforce the strong U.S. presence on the Korean Peninsula and send a clear message of American resolve to the North Korean regime. The Vice President will reaffirm to the leaders of Japan and South Korea the United States’ unwavering commitment to our allies and to deter and defend against the North Korean threat. In addition to showing support for our U.S. athletes, the Vice President will show his confidence in and appreciation for our U.S. military stationed in the region.

The Washington Post reported that Pence has invited Fred Warmbier (the father of Otto Warmbier, the American student who was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor while visiting North Korea and died after his return to the United States as a result of being mistreated while in custody) to attend the opening ceremonies of the Olympic Games with him Friday evening.

Shortly before Pence made his announcement in Tokyo, South Korea’s Unification Ministry announced that Kim Jong-un, the supreme leader of North Korea, planned to send his sister, Kim Yo-jong, as part of the North’s high-level delegation to the Olympic Games. She will become the first member of the North’s ruling family to visit the South.



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The North Korean 22-member Olympic delegation will be headed by Kim Yong-nam, the president of the Presidium of North Korea's Parliament, who serves as a nominal head of state.

On February 8, North Korea's state-run media cited a statement from an unnamed Foreign Ministry official who said the Pyongyang regime is not interested in meeting with Pence while he is in South Korea for the Winter Olympics, reported Fox News.

"We are not going to use such a sports festival as the Winter Olympics as a political lever," the official reportedly said. "There is no need to do so."

Despite the North's expressed lack of interest in meeting with Pence, the *New York Times* reported on February 6 that while speaking to reporters in Alaska during a stopover on his way to Japan and South Korea, the vice president did not rule out contact with North Korean officials when he attends the Olympics, saying, "I have not requested a meeting, but we'll see what happens."

Pence told reporters that part of the purpose of his visit was to tell "the truth about North Korea at every stop."

"We're traveling to the Olympics to make sure that North Korea doesn't use the powerful symbolism and the backdrop of the Winter Olympics to paper over the truth about their regime," he said, calling Pyongyang "a regime that oppresses its own people, a regime that threatens nations around the world, a regime that continues its headlong rush to develop nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles."

Pence continued: "President Trump has said he always believes in talking, but I haven't requested any meeting. But we'll see what happens."

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