



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 28, 2017

Tillerson Say U.S. Open to Talks With North Korea — Seeks Denuclearized Korean Peninsula

In an April 27 interview with NPR's Steve Inskeep, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson (shown) said the Trump administration is open to having direct talks with North Korea, so long as the agenda focuses on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.



Tillerson will chair an April 28 ministerial meeting of the UN Security Council where discussions will be about curtailing North Korea's nuclear program. The U.S. ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, is serving as the president of the Security Council for the month of April.

"You know if you listen to the North Korea, their reason for having nuclear weapons is they believe it is their only pathway to secure the ongoing existence of their regime," Tillerson told Inskeep. "We hope to convince them is that: you do not need these weapons to secure the existence of your regime.... We do not seek a collapse of the regime. We do not seek an accelerated reunification of the peninsula. We seek a denuclearized Korean peninsula."

In another April 27 interview with Fox News, Tillerson said: "We entered office confronted with a very serious threat from North Korea. We knew that coming in, and the president gave that immediate attention. Tensions are running a bit high right now. We expected they would. In our approach to addressing this issue, we know there's going to be risk involved."

Tillerson told Fox that the United States is not seeking "regime change" to topple the family dynasty of Kim Jong Un, or an "excuse" for the reunification the Korean Peninsula, which is now divided between U.S. ally South Korea and the communist regime in Pyongyang.

"We're going to be discussing what next steps may be necessary to increase the pressure on the regime at Pyongyang to have them reconsider their current posture," Tillerson said in the Fox interview.

The *Washington Post* cited statements Tillerson made in both interviews and noted that the Trump administration is taking a tougher line than past efforts by both Democratic and Republican administrations. He said that in setting terms for direct talks, the administration would insist that they be directed at getting rid of North Korea's nuclear weapons entirely, rather than freezing the program in exchange for economic benefits.

CNBC reported on April 28 that Tillerson, speaking at the UN Security Council meeting that day, said that the nations must put "new pressure" on Pyongyang amid the "growing threat" of the communist state's nuclear efforts. He called for allies to fully implement existing sanctions, suspend or reduce diplomatic relations with North Korea and exert "maximum economic pressure" against Pyongyang.

"I urge this council to act before North Korea does. We must work together to adopt a new approach and impose increased diplomatic and economic pressures on the North Korean regime," Tillerson said.



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Addressing the Security Council, Tillerson called on the nations to “suspend or downgrade” diplomatic relations with North Korea and urged new sanctions on “entities and individuals supporting [North Korea’s] weapons and missile programs,” while tightening those in place.

Tillerson added that although “all options,” including military action, are in play, if necessary, the United States prefers a negotiated solution.

“Diplomatic and financial levers of power will be backed up by willingness to counteract North Korean aggression with military action, if necessary,” he said.

If Tillerson and, by extension, President Trump, believes that UN sanctions backed by the threat of military force are the answer to reining in North Korea, they may wish to revisit the history of the UN’s involvement in the Korean peninsula. As we noted in [our article on February 15](#), “Given the history of the UN’s role in settling international disputes, there is much evidence that the world body’s imposition of sanctions, especially when they are enforced by ‘peacekeeping’ forces or coalitions of UN members, have often led to armed conflict.”

In that article, we took a look back to June 27, 1950 (just two days after North Korea invaded South Korea), when the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 83, recommending that UN members provide assistance to the Republic of Korea “to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security to the area.”

By September 1, 1950, the UN command had a strength of 180,000 in Korea, 92,000 of whom were South Koreans, the balance being mostly Americans and the 1,600-man British 27th Infantry Brigade.

That is typical of UN “peacekeeping” operations. The United States always supplies a disproportionate share of the manpower and the financing. Despite this large contribution, however, U.S. forces are never allowed to achieve victory, but are hamstrung by a command structure that passes through the UN bureaucracy. During the Korean War, something much worse than bureaucratic ineptitude was at play. Orders to the UN forces were sent through the UN’s undersecretary-general for political and security council affairs, a position held from 1949-1953 by Konstantin Zinchenko — a Soviet communist. With the North Koreans having an ally at the UN previewing UN command military operations and undoubtedly passing along information about those operations to Pyongyang, can there be any wonder that complete and total victory by the U.S. and UN forces was so elusive?

By the cessation of hostilities on July 27, 1953, the day the Armistice Agreement was signed, the United States had 302,483 troops in Korea, second only to South Korea’s 590,911. A total of 36,516 Americans died in the Korean War.

As we concluded our February 15 article:

There is nothing that can be accomplished by UN sanctions that could not be accomplished unilaterally by individual nations by imposing their own economic boycotts on North Korea.

If and when U.S. military action should ever be advisable, which should be only if U.S. interests alone are threatened, that should be accomplished as the Constitution provides, though a congressional declaration of war. U.S. presidents should never go to the UN and ask for a resolution as justification for military intervention, since such actions signal that the United States is not a sovereign nation and must ask permission from the UN — a “supranational body,” to provide for its own defense.

Photo of Rex Tillerson: U.S. Department of State



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