



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 15, 2017

North Korea Missile Test Draws Reactions From Trump, Abe, and UN

North Korea fired a medium- to long-range ballistic missile early on February 12, Korea time, that traveled approximately 340 miles before falling into the Sea of Japan.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said after the launch that he expected the Trump administration to adopt a harder line on North Korea. Speaking during a joint appearance with President Trump in Florida on the evening of February 11, Abe said: “North Korea’s most recent missile launch is absolutely intolerable.”



Trump also made a brief statement after the missile launch: “I just want everybody to understand and fully know that the United States of America stands behind Japan, its great ally, 100 percent.”

At a subsequent news conference on February 13, Trump said: “Obviously North Korea is a big, big problem and we will deal with [the missile test] very strongly.”

“I believe that the stance of the United States towards North Korea will become much tougher, that is clear,” Abe said on Japan’s NHK public broadcasting news program after returning from meetings with Trump at Mar-a-Lago (the “winter White House”) in Florida.

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Reuters reported that Trump did not mention any planned response, but the U.S. ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, said in a statement following an emergency Security Council meeting on February 13 that was called by the United States, Japan, and South Korea to discuss North Korea’s missile launch: “We call on all members of the Security Council to use every available resource to make it clear to the North Korean regime — and its enablers — that these launches are unacceptable.”

South Korea’s military described the missile launch as a “show of force” to the new Trump administration, reported Reuters.

The Security Council issued a statement agreed to by all 15 members critical of North Korea’s missile launch, which said: “The members of the Security Council deplore all the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea ballistic missile activities, including these launches.” However, the council did not indicate what action it might take beyond the UN-sponsored sanctions imposed on North Korea since 2006 over its nuclear and ballistic missile tests.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called North Korea’s latest launch “a further troubling violation” of council resolutions and urged North Korea to comply with its international obligations, said UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq, as quoted by *Time*. “The secretary-general appeals to the international community to continue to address this situation in a united manner,” Haq said.

The *Time* report observed that the Security Council’s statement used the same words as its prior statement issued in response to North Korea’s unsuccessful missile test last October 17. That statement



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was followed by a sanctions resolution on November 30 targeting North Korea's hard currency revenues by placing a cap on the communist nation's coal exports. The sanction cut those exports by at least 62 percent, with an estimated value of \$800 million.

Japan's ambassador to the Republic of (South) Korea, Koro Bessho, told reporters the key is implementing sanctions to get North Korea to change course. "I think we need to keep pushing because we're not looking for a military solution," he said. "We have to have a peaceful solution, and the Security Council ... is the body that is most suited for that role."

Bessho's statement may be wishful thinking, at best. 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.

On June 27, 1950, 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."

The Soviets did not use their veto to stop this action, since they were boycotting the United Nations. (Some believe that they stayed away for precisely that reason because they wanted the United States to become entangled in the upcoming war.)

By September 1, 1950, the United Nations 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.

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.

President George W. Bush went before the UN General Assembly on September 12, 2003 and outlined a catalogue of complaints against the Iraqi government to build a case for the invasion of Iraq. The invasion began on March 20, 2003.

In his speech, Bush asserted: "In violation of Security Council Resolution 1373, Iraq supports terrorist organizations that direct violence against Iran, Israel, and Western governments.... And al-Qaida terrorists escaped from Afghanistan are known to be in Iraq."

After toppling Saddam Husein and producing a power vacuum that ISIS exploited to build up a large stronghold, 4,497 Americans died in Iraq.

UN Security Council Resolution 1973, on the ongoing conflict in Libya, adopted on March 17, 2011, formed the legal basis for NATO's military intervention in the Libyan Civil War. The United States and its NATO allies toppled leader Moammar Gadhafi, and subsequently helped turn Libya into a higher security threat than it was before the military intervention. Terrorist groups including ISIS and al-Qaeda entered Libya.

Many other examples of UN resolutions being used to justify military operations could be cited, but these provide a sampling of such actions.

Japan's Bessho told reporters that the Security Council is the body that is most suited for providing a peaceful solution to the tensions in the Korean peninsula. However, the costly war in Korea from 1950 through 1953, in which 36,516 Americans died, should serve as a reminder of what can happen when



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the UN gets involved in a conflict.

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.

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