

# Intercept The Next NK Missile Launched?

The United States Missile Defense Agency has recently performed exercises to demonstrate the effectiveness of its medium range ballistic missile intercept capabilities. While not a perfect record, the instances of interception are sufficient to alert Kim Jung Un that reliance on an offensive ballistic missile capability is folly not only because U.S. and allied retaliatory strikes are certain to end all life North of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel but also because Un's first strike capability may be mooted before a single ballistic missile hits its target. Using the effectiveness of our intercept capability to strategic advantage the time may soon arrive when we would do well to prove the intercept not solely by shooting down a test missile but by shooting down a missile launched by Un that passes over allied territory.

Under United Nations' resolutions, Un's nuclear program, including his launch of test weapons over the territories of South Korea and Japan, are clear violations of international law. When the President is satisfied that the U.S. Missile Defense Agency has maximized the effectiveness of the intercepts such that he can with a high degree of certainty count on those systems to take out ballistic missiles before they reach their targets, why not deploy the land and sea based systems sufficiently to enable an effective defense against multiple simultaneous launches by North Korea?

Then, we could give Un an ultimatum. We could explain that his repeated launch of medium range ballistic missiles over the territories of South Korea and Japan are in violation of international law and pose a direct threat to the security of those nations. We could then explain that if any future launch would place a North Korean missile over an allied

nation's territory, it will be destroyed before impact.

That will then place Un in the position of either having to test our resolve by launching a missile over allied territory or refrain from doing so in favor of launches that do not cross allied territories. We would then be free to destroy any missile launched that passes over the territory of Japan or South Korea. The actual deployment against Un's actual missiles would have a major effect on North Korean confidence in the nation's offensive ballistic weapon capabilities.

While blunting directly the threat posed by Un is increasingly a necessity for the United States and its allies, doing so will not contain the overall threat posed by North Korea. North Korea poses a threat through its support of terror and its reliance on unconventional means to deliver nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons. North Korea is also able to launch a major conventional attack on the South, but doing so would likely provoke a tactical nuclear response and an overwhelmingly destructive American and allied military campaign against the North that would be rapid and overwhelming, resulting in the annihilation of the North,

By taking additional, more direct steps now to counter North Korea atop reliance on economic sanctions, the United States and its allies are likely to prove Un's threat less ominous. With each instance whereby we prove the threat lessened, it diminishes not only the persuasive force of Un's extortionate demands but also his lease on life. At some point, a challenge from within the regime or inspired by China may topple Un, particularly if his jingoism does not cause the United States to blink or make concessions, as was the unfortunate history of our diplomacy prior to President Trump.

Presently China benefits from strategic intelligence it gathers from U.S. and allied response to Un's saber rattling. If China perceives a pattern in American response that suggests a lack of resolve to defend its own or allied

interests in the region, China's appetite for overthrowing Taiwan will increase, as will its expansion of military control over the South China Sea and the islands it contests with Japan. From China's vantage point, that benefit is outweighed by disadvantage if the United States acts resolutely to defend its own and its allies' interests by means that prove the Un threat incapable of effectuation, and if the United States greatly expands its offensive military capabilities in the region.

President Trump will do well to avoid negotiation with Un, maintain an ever expanding and tightening American military encirclement, denuding and defanging of North Korea, and rise to thwart more directly the demonstrations of offensive capability offered by Un. Contained and increasingly proven to lack an effective offensive capability, Un will be less able to maintain his hold on power and less able to curry meaningful support from China. China will also find it more difficult to expand its influence in the region.

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