

World News Roundup

Diplomacy

Trump doubles down on Biden

'Bolton missile remark is more than ignorant'

SEOUL, May 27, (RTRS): US National Security Adviser **John Bolton** is "more than ignorant" to argue that North Korea's recent missile tests violated UN resolutions, the North's foreign ministry said in a statement on Monday.

Giving up missile tests would mean giving up the right to self defence, a North Korean foreign ministry spokesman was quoted as saying in a statement issued by the state KCNA news agency.

The unidentified spokesman singled out Bolton, who last week said the recent tests "no doubt" violated UN Security Council resolutions.

"His claim is indeed much more than ignorant," the spokesman said. "Our military drill neither targeted anyone nor endangered the surrounding countries, but Bolton makes dogged claims that it constitutes a violation of the 'resolutions', impudently poking his nose into other's internal matters."



Bolton

Bolton, a regular target of North Korean criticism, is more of a "security-destroying adviser" than a security adviser, the spokesman added.

"It is not at all strange that perverse words always come out from the mouth of a structurally defective guy," the spokesman said.

Earlier in May, North Korean military forces test fired several rockets and missiles, including several guided missiles that experts said could be used to penetrate South Korean and American defences.

Leading

The missiles flew on a flattened, lower-altitude trajectory, leading some officials in South Korea to question whether the weapons should be categorized as "ballistic missiles" and therefore a likely violation of UN Security Council resolutions against North Korea.

The White House has played down the tests, with US President Donald Trump saying they were short range and therefore not a breach of trust by leader Kim Jong Un.

An official at South Korea's presidential Blue House told reporters on Monday a joint analysis with the United States was still under way to assess the missile tests.

But others, including the Japanese government and Bolton have said the tests were clear violations of the UN resolutions.

During a visit to Japan on Monday, Trump alluded to Bolton's views and said he disagreed.

"My people think it could have been a violation, as you know," Trump told a news conference.

"I view it differently - I view it as a man, perhaps he wants to get attention. Perhaps not. Who knows? It doesn't matter. All I know is that there have been no nuclear tests, no ballistic missiles going out, no long-range missiles going out. And I think that some day we'll have a deal."

The North Korean spokesman said in the KCNA statement that "whatever is launched is bound to fly drawing a ballistic trajectory".

"What the U.S. is taking the issue is not about the range but the prohibition of the launch itself using ballistic technology," the North Korean ministry spokesman said.

"This is, after all, tantamount to a demand that the DPRK should give up its self-defensive right," he said, using the initials of North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

North Korea has never recognised the legality of the resolutions barring its development and testing of ballistic missiles, he said.

"As for the UNSC 'resolutions' which Bolton recklessly referred to ... those 'resolutions' are illegal and outrageous ones that completely deny the rights to existence and development of a sovereign state," he said.

Bolton is known as an anti-North Korea "war maniac" who "fabricated various provocative policies such as designation of our country as 'axis of evil', preemptive strike and regime change", the spokesman said.

Last year, Kim said his nuclear force was complete and that he would no longer test nuclear weapons or long-range ballistic missiles. Over the past year, Kim has met Trump twice in a bid to end the stalemate over the North's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

Meanwhile, President Donald Trump doubled down on his support for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's scathing view of former US Vice-President Joe Biden on Monday, dismissing criticism that he was siding with a dictator over a fellow American.

"Well Kim Jong Un made a statement that Joe Biden is a low IQ individual. He probably is, based on his record. I think I agree with him on that," Trump told a news conference in Tokyo.

Tweet

The comments reinforced a tweet that Trump sent on Saturday with a similar message.

North Korea's state-run news agency issued a stinging attack last week on Biden, who has been critical of the isolated state. Trump has targeted Biden with increasing criticism as the former vice president rises in polls for the Democratic presidential nomination to challenge Trump in 2020.

The president often derides his political opponents, but his tweet on Sunday and his comments on Monday were notable for the fact that he issued them while abroad and aligned himself with Kim, considered a brutal dictator by many.

Trump has sought to build a strong relationship with the North Korean leader in the hopes of reaching an eventual peace deal.

Trump also knocked Biden and former president Barack Obama on Monday for their efforts to prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. Trump pulled the United States out of a nuclear deal Iran sealed with Washington and other foreign powers.

"Joe Biden was a disaster, his administration with President Obama, they were basically a disaster when it came to so many things, whether it was economy, whether it was military ... no matter what it was, they had a lot of problems," Trump said when asked about criticism that he was favoring Kim over the former vice president.

"So, I'm not a fan."

A commentary by North Korea's KCNA state media on Tuesday slammed Biden for "rhetoric slandering the supreme leadership of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)."

"What he uttered is just sophism of an imbecile bereft of elementary quality as a human being, let alone a politician," the North Korean news agency said.

Furthermore, Families of Japanese who were abducted by North Korea in the 1970s and 1980s have thanked President Donald Trump for his sympathy and for meeting with them while visiting Japan.



US President Donald Trump (left), speaks during a news conference with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (second from left), at Akasaka Palace in Tokyo, Japan, on May 27, 2019. (AP)

Diplomacy

'Peace, stability of Middle East vital for Japan and US'

Trump, Abe at odds over NKorean missile tests

TOKYO, MAY 27, (AP): President Donald Trump said Monday he is not "personally" bothered by recent short-range North Korean missile tests and doesn't believe they violated UN Security Council resolutions, breaking with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who is hosting the president on a four-day state visit full of pageantry and pomp.

Trump also continued his attacks against former Vice President and 2020 Democratic hopeful Joe Biden, siding with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, who recently criticized Biden as having a low IQ.

The visit was designed to highlight the US-Japan alliance and showcase the warm relations between the leaders. Trump said he and Abe deliberated over economic issues, including trade and Iran, during hours of talks at the Akasaka Palace. But North Korea's recent firing of short-range missiles emerged as an area of disagreement at a press conference Monday.

Asked if he was bothered by the missile tests, Trump said: "No, I'm not. I am personally not."

Japan has long voiced concern about short-range missiles because of the threat they pose to the Island nation's security.

Trump also said he disagrees with the assessment of many experts - as well as his own national security adviser - that the tests violate UN Security Council resolutions.

"My people think it could have been a violation," Trump said. "I view it differently. I view it as a man - perhaps he wants to get attention and perhaps not. Who knows?"

Standing beside Trump at a news conference held after hours of talks, Abe, who has forged a strong friendship with Trump and showered him with praise throughout the day, disagreed with the US president, saying the missile tests were "of great regret."

The Republican president has sought to downplay the significance of the missile tests, even though his own national security adviser, John Bolton, said over the weekend that they violated the UN resolutions.

Trump was invited to Japan to be the first world leader to meet with the country's new emperor. And despite

being far from Washington, he didn't miss the chance to lob another broadside against Biden. Trump didn't hold back at the news conference, telling the world he agreed with the authoritarian North Korean leader's assessment of Biden and declaring himself "not a fan."

"Kim Jong Un made a statement that Joe Biden is a low-IQ individual," Trump said. "He probably is based on his record. I think I agree with him on that."

US officeholders have in the past generally avoided engaging in politics while on foreign soil, hewing to the adage that politics stops at the water's edge. But Trump's sharp attack on Biden, through his declaration of agreement with Kim, set aside that long-standing norm.

Biden, during a recent campaign event, accused Trump of cozying up to "dictators and tyrants" like Kim.

Hold

Trump continues to hold out hope of getting Kim to agree to give up his nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles, even though the two summits he's had with the North Korean leader have produced no concrete pledge to denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

Trump praised Kim, calling him a "smart man" who might have launched the missiles earlier this month to "get attention."

"All I know is there have been no nuclear tests, no ballistic missiles going out, no long-range missiles going out, and I think that someday we'll have a deal," Trump said, adding that he is in "no rush."

Trump is correct that North Korea has not recently tested a long-range missile that could reach the US. But earlier this month, North Korea fired off a series of short-range missiles that alarmed US allies in closer proximity to North Korea, including Japan. The tests broke a pause in North Korea's ballistic missile launches that began in late 2017.

Abe reiterated his previous statement that the tests were conducted in defiance of the UN

"This is violating the Security Council resolution," Abe said, adding that, as North Korea's neighbor, Japan feels

threatened. "It is of great regret. But at the same time between Kim Jong Un and President Trump a certain new approach was taken and that is something that I pay tribute to."

Earlier Monday, Trump said he backed Abe's interest in leveraging his country's good relations with Iran to help broker a possible dialogue between the US and its nemesis in the Middle East. Abe said he is willing to do whatever he can to help to reduce escalating tensions between the US and Iran.

"Peace and stability of (the) Middle East is very important for Japan and the United States and also for the international community as a whole," Abe said.

Abe could visit Iran next month. Trump also said his only aim is to prevent the country from obtaining nuclear weapons. "We're not looking for regime change," he said. "I just want to make that clear. We're looking for no nuclear weapons."

Trump and Abe held hours of talks Monday after the US president, at Abe's invitation, became the first world leader to meet Japan's new emperor, Naruhito, who ascended to the throne May 1.

The meeting with Naruhito and his wife, Empress Masako, was preceded by a grand outdoor welcome ceremony at Japan's Imperial Palace, where Trump walked solo across red carpets, reviewing Japanese troops as the guest of honor.

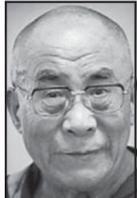
Trump's official visit also included golf with Abe, presenting a trophy he created to a sumo wrestling champion and a black-tie banquet at the palace - as well as hours of one-on-one time for Trump and Abe, who has been trying to remain on Trump's good side despite disagreements, including over trade.

Trump and Abe largely glossed over those differences, despite the potentially crippling tariffs on foreign autos that Trump is threatening to impose on Japan and the European Union. Trump declined to say what Japan would have to do to avoid those tariffs but complained of an "unbelievably large" trade imbalance with the nation.

Still, he said he expects to reach trade deals with Japan and China, but wouldn't rush it.



US first lady Melania Trump looks at koi carp in a pond at the Japanese style annex inside the State Guest House in Tokyo on May 27. (AP)



Dalai Lama



Terry Branstad

Asia

US ambassador raises concerns: The US ambassador to China urged Beijing to engage in substantive dialogue with exiled Tibetan Buddhist leader the **Dalai Lama** during a visit to the Himalayan region over the past week, the US Embassy said Saturday.

Terry Branstad also "expressed concerns regarding the Chinese government's interference in Tibetan Buddhists' freedom to organize and practice their religion," an embassy statement said.

"He encouraged the Chinese government to engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences," it said.

Branstad also raised long-standing concerns about the lack of consistent access to the Tibetan Autonomous Region. The rare visit to the TAR and neighboring Qinghai province ran from Sunday through Saturday.

Hosted by the Tibet Autonomous Region government, Branstad was given access to important religious and cultural sites, including the Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, Norbulingka, and Sera Monastery in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa. He also met with senior Tibetan religious and cultural leaders, the embassy said.

China tightly restricts access to Tibet by foreigners, especially journalists and diplomats. In response to those restrictions, the US Congress last year passed an act that would deny entry to the United States for those involved in formulating or enforcing such policies.

There was no immediate response from Beijing, although Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang last week said China welcomed Branstad to witness the "earth-shaking changes in the people's production and life since Tibet's peaceful liberation more than 60 years ago."

"I hope that this visit to Tibet can help Ambassador Branstad make a conclusion without prejudice in the spirit of respecting the facts ... instead of being confused and disturbed by some long-standing hearsay and defamatory speeches," Lu said at a regularly scheduled briefing.

China says Tibet has been part of its territory for centuries, but many Tibetans say they were effectively an independent nation for most of that time. Beijing's control was most recently asserted when the Communist Party's military wing, the People's Liberation Army, invaded the region in 1950.

The Dalai Lama fled to India amid an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in

1959 and calls for genuine autonomy for Tibet under Chinese rule. Beijing labels the 83-year-old cleric a dangerous separatist, has refused contacts with his representatives for more than a decade and objects

strongly to any meetings between him and foreign politicians.

In recent years there has been a significant tightening of control over Tibetan Buddhism, use of the Tibetan language and

traditional cultural expression. Following anti-government protests in 2008, Beijing imposed a policy of "grid policing" that substantially reduces travel and social life for Tibetans, even while China ramps up domestic tourism in the region.

Those methods have been subsequently imposed in the neighboring region of Xinjiang, where an estimated 1 million members of its native Muslim ethnic groups have been confined to detention centers. (AP)

Thousands march in Hong Kong:

More than 2,000 people are marching in Hong Kong to mark 30 years since a pro-democracy protest in Beijing's Tiananmen Square ended in bloodshed.

Demonstrators took to the streets Sunday afternoon holding yellow umbrellas that read "Support Freedom, Oppose Evil Laws."

Some people carried a black coffin, while others pushed wheeled white crosses and the numbers 6 and 4 - a nod to the day on June 4, 1989, when leaders of China's ruling Communist Party ordered the military to re-take Tiananmen Square from student-led protesters.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of unarmed protesters and onlookers were killed late on June 3 and in the early hours of June 4 as a result of the martial action.

Commemorations of the event are strictly banned in mainland China. (RTRS)



An army soldier aims his machine gun in front of photographers during an anti-terrorism drill as part of Uchi Taeguk exercise at a park in Seoul, South Korea on May 27. The four-day Uchi Taeguk exercises will include massive civilian evacuation drills and a South Korea-only military drill aimed at preparing for war situations and disasters. (AP)