

# **Articles on the US-North Korea crisis (IX) - New sanctions, Militarisation, Winter Olympics**

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**The UN security council has unanimously approved tough new sanctions on North Korea in response to its latest launch of a ballistic missile that Pyongyang says is capable of reaching anywhere on the US mainland.**

## Contents

- [North Koreans working overseas](#)
- [North Korea declares new \(...\)](#)
- [Japan boosts defence budget to](#)
- [South Korea president suggests](#)

## **North Koreans working overseas must return home under new UN sanctions**

**UN security council unanimously approves measures, including lower limits on oil imports and a crackdown on smuggling, after latest ballistic missile launch.**

The UN security council has unanimously approved tough new sanctions on North Korea in response to its latest launch of a ballistic missile that Pyongyang says is capable of reaching anywhere on the US mainland.

The new sanctions approved in the council resolution include sharply lower limits on North Korea's oil imports, the return home of all North Koreans working overseas within 24 months, and a crackdown on ships smuggling banned items including coal and oil to and from the country.

Donald Trump welcomed the sanctions in a tweet, saying the world wanted "peace, not death".

But the resolution doesn't include even harsher measures sought by the Trump administration that would ban all oil imports and freeze international assets of the government and its leader, Kim Jong-un.

The resolution, drafted by the United States and negotiated with China, drew criticism from Russia for the short time the 13 other council countries had to consider the text, and last-minute changes to the text. One of those changes was raising the deadline for North Korean workers to return home from 12 months to 24 months.

The US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, said after the vote: "The unity this council has shown in leveling these unprecedented sanctions is a reflection of the international outrage at the Kim regime's actions."

The resolution caps crude oil imports at 4m barrels a year. It caps imports of refined oil products, including diesel and kerosene, at 500,000 barrels a year. This represents a nearly 90% ban on refined products, which are key to North Korea's economy, and a reduction from the 2m barrels a year the council authorized in September.

The new sanctions also ban the export of food products, machinery, electrical equipment, earth and stones, wood and vessels from North Korea. And it bans all countries from exporting industrial equipment, machinery, transportation vehicles and industrial metals to the country.

North Korea's test on 29 November of its most powerful intercontinental ballistic missile yet was its 20<sup>th</sup> launch of a ballistic missile this year, and added to fears that the North will soon have a military arsenal that can viably target the US mainland.

Britain's UN ambassador, Matthew Rycroft, said the security council was sending "a very strong united signal to the North Korean regime that enough is enough, that they must stop their nuclear program and they must stop their intercontinental ballistic missile program".

France's UN ambassador, François Delattre, said: "We believe maximum pressure today is our best lever to a political and diplomatic solution tomorrow ... [and] our best antidote to the risk of war."

The previous sanctions resolution was adopted on 11 September in response to North Korea's sixth and strongest nuclear test explosion, on 3 September.

Haley said at the time that the Trump administration believed those new sanctions, combined with previous measures, would ban over 90% of North Korea's exports reported in 2016.

Those new sanctions banned North Korea from importing all natural gas liquids and condensates. It also banned all textile exports and prohibited any country from authorizing new work permits for North Korean workers - two key sources of hard currency for the north-east Asian country.

The US mission said a cutoff on new work permits would eventually cost North Korea about \$500m a year once current work permits expire. The US estimated about 93,000 North Koreans are working abroad, a US official said.

The resolution approved on Friday expresses concern that the foreign earnings from these workers are being used to support the country's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. It requires all countries to send North Korean workers and safety monitors home by the end of 2019.

**Associated Press** at the United Nations

\* *The Guardian*. Sat 23 Dec '17 05.08 GMT First published on Fri 22 Dec '17 20.40 GMT:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/22/north-korea-un-sanctions-workers-return>

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## **North Korea declares new UN sanctions are 'act of war'**

**Pyongyang threatens countries will pay a 'heavy price' for backing resolution to ban 90% of petroleum exports.**

The latest United Nations sanctions against North Korea are an act of war and tantamount to a complete economic blockade, the country's foreign ministry said on Sunday, threatening to punish those who supported the measure.

The UN security council unanimously imposed new sanctions on North Korea on Friday for its recent intercontinental ballistic missile test, seeking to limit its access to refined petroleum products and crude oil, and its earnings from workers abroad.

The UN resolution seeks to ban nearly 90% of refined petroleum exports to North Korea by capping them at 500,000 barrels a year and, in a last-minute change, demands the repatriation of North Koreans working abroad within 24 months, instead of 12 months as first proposed.

The United States-drafted resolution also caps crude oil supplies to North Korea at 4m barrels a year and commits the council to further reductions if it were to conduct another nuclear test or launch another ICBM.

In a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency, North Korea's foreign ministry said the US was terrified by its nuclear force and was getting "more and more frenzied in the moves to impose the harshest-ever sanctions and pressure on our country".

The new resolution is tantamount to a complete economic blockade of North Korea, the ministry said.

"We define this 'sanctions resolution' rigged up by the US and its followers as a grave infringement upon the sovereignty of our republic, as an act of war violating peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and the region, and categorically reject the 'resolution'," the ministry said.

North Korea on 29 November said it successfully tested a new ICBM that put the US mainland within range of its nuclear weapons.

North Korea's nuclear weapons are a self-defensive deterrence not in contradiction of international law, its foreign ministry added.

"We will further consolidate our self-defensive nuclear deterrence aimed at fundamentally eradicating the US nuclear threats, blackmail and hostile moves by establishing the practical balance of force with the US," the ministry said.

"The US should not forget [for] even a second the entity of the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea], which rapidly emerged as a strategic state capable of posing a substantial nuclear threat to the US mainland," it added.

North Korea said those who voted for the sanctions would face Pyongyang's wrath.

"Those countries that raised their hands in favour of this 'sanctions resolution' shall be held completely responsible for all the consequences to be caused by the 'resolution' and we will make sure for ever and ever that they pay heavy price for what they have done."

Tension has been rising over North Korea's nuclear and missile programmes, which it pursues in defiance of years of UN security council resolutions, with bellicose rhetoric coming from both Pyongyang and the White House.

In November, North Korea demanded a halt to what it called "brutal sanctions", saying a round imposed after its sixth and most powerful nuclear test on 3 September constituted genocide.

US diplomats have made clear they are seeking a diplomatic solution, but proposed the new, tougher sanctions resolution to ratchet up pressure on the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un.

China, with which North Korea does some 90% of its trade, has repeatedly called for calm and restraint from all sides.

The Chinese foreign ministry on Saturday said the new resolution also reiterated the need for a peaceful resolution via talks and that all sides needed to take steps to reduce tensions.

Widely read Chinese state-run tabloid the Global Times said on Saturday the tougher resolution was aimed at preventing war and noted the US had compromised, with no indication the UN could grant the US permission for military action.

"The difference between the new resolution and the original US proposal reflects the will of China and Russia to prevent war and chaos on the Korean peninsula. If the US proposals were accepted, only war is foreseeable," the *Global Times* said in an editorial.

## Reuters

\* *The Guardian*. Sun 24 Dec '17 09.15 GMT First published on Sun 24 Dec '17 05.43 GMT:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/24/north-korea-declares-new-un-sanctions-an-act-of-war>

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## **Japan boosts defence budget to record levels with eye on North Korea**

**Shinzo Abe's plan includes missile systems to launch a pre-emptive strike, a move critics say violates the constitution.**

Japan's government has approved a record defence budget, with money earmarked for costly missile defence systems and, controversially, weapons that could be used in pre-emptive strikes against North Korea.

The 5.19tn yen (\$46bn) budget, up 1.3% from last year, is the largest ever and marks the six straight annual rise in defence spending under Japan's conservative prime minister, Shinzo Abe.

Abe, who ended a decade of defence cuts soon after becoming prime minister in late 2012, has described the threat posed by North Korean ballistic missiles as a "national crisis".

The regime has launched two missiles over northern Japan this year, and several others have landed inside its 200 nautical-mile exclusive economic zone. In September, North Korea threatened to "sink Japan into the sea" with a nuclear bomb after Tokyo and Washington spearheaded a new round of UN security council sanctions against the regime.

Defence officials say Japan needs to drastically and quickly upgrade its missile defence in response to Pyongyang's rapid development of long-range missiles and nuclear weapons.

The defence minister, Itsunori Onodera, said this month: "At a time when North Korea is beefing up its ballistic missile capability, we need to strengthen our capability fundamentally."

The new budget, which has to be approved by parliament, came days after Japan said it would buy land-based Aegis Ashore missile defence systems from the US to improve its ability to locate and destroy incoming North Korean missiles.

About 730m yen (\$6.4m) was set aside to prepare for the introduction of the systems, which will be operational by 2023 and are expected to cost at least 200bn yen.

Amid pressure from hawkish members of Abe's ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP), Japan will also acquire cruise missiles that could be used in pre-emptive strikes against North Korean military sites.

The budget includes more than 2bn yen for a Norwegian-built cruise missile with a range of 500km that can be fired from F-35 stealth fighter jets. Japan also plans to buy US-made cruise missiles with a range of 900km.

In addition to the land-based Aegis radar stations, Japan will invest in a new, longer-range interceptor, the SM-3 Block IIA, designed to strike ballistic missiles in space, and upgrades to Patriot missile batteries – the last line of defence against incoming warheads.

The heavy spending on US military hardware comes after Donald Trump vowed to boost arms sales by pressuring Japan and South Korea to play a bigger role in their own defence. "It's a lot of jobs for us and a lot of safety for Japan," Trump said during a visit to Asia last month.

Critics say possession of a first-strike capability violates Japan's constitution, which bans the use of force to settle international disputes and has restricted the country's military to a purely defensive role since the end of the second world war.

Onodera and other senior LDP officials say Japan would target North Korean missile sites only if it believed an attack was imminent – a move they insist would not violate the country's "pacifist" principles.

But Yukio Edano, whose Constitutional Democratic party of Japan fought October's general election vowing to defend Japan's postwar constitution, said the acquisition of cruise missiles would be a "fairly big point of dispute" when MPs debate the budget next month.

Akira Kato, a professor of international politics and regional security at JF Oberlin University in Tokyo, said the Abe administration was exploiting the North Korean crisis to bolster Japan's defences. "Japan is expected to continue strengthening its defence power for the time being," Kato told Agence France-Presse.

While the budget's focus was on North Korea, it included more than 55bn yen for the construction of military facilities on two outlying islands to boost the ability to respond to Chinese activity in the East China Sea.

The islands are not far from the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands – uninhabited outcrops that are administered by Japan but claimed by China, whose vessels regularly enter Japanese waters near the territories.

**Justin McCurry** in Tokyo

\* *The Guardian*. Fri 22 Dec '17 04.51 GMT Last modified on Fri 22 Dec '17 04.57 GMT:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/22/japan-boosts-defence-budget-to-record-levels-with-eye-on-north-korea>

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## **South Korea president suggests joint drills with US could be suspended**

**Moon Jae-in says if Pyongyang behaves itself, North Korean athletes could also be invited to take part in Winter Olympics.**

The South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, has suggested his country's joint military drills with the US could be postponed to reduce tensions with North Korea, but said the move would depend on Pyongyang's actions in the coming weeks.

Moon also said he would like North Korean athletes to participate in the upcoming Winter Olympics in the South Korean town of Pyeongchang, amid concern that the regime could try to disrupt the Games, possibly by testing ballistic missiles or launching a cyber attack.

Sonic attack: why South Korea bombards the North with news, K-pop and good times  
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"It is possible for South Korea and the US to review the possibility of postponing the exercises," Moon said in an interview with the US broadcaster NBC.

"I have made such a suggestion to the US and the US is currently reviewing it. However, all this depends on how North Korea behaves."

While Washington and Seoul insist that their joint military activity is purely defensive, the drills have become a major source of tension in the region, with North Korea denouncing them as rehearsals for an invasion.

A spokesman for the US Pacific command, Dave Benham, declined to discuss any plans for exercises.

The US and South Korea hold drills throughout the year to improve their readiness for a North Korean attack. The two biggest, held every spring, involve tens of thousands of US and South Korean troops.

Earlier this month, the countries launched large-scale joint aerial drills, a week after North Korea said it had tested an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of striking the US mainland. More than 230 aircraft took part, including six F-22 Raptor stealth fighters.

"If North Korea stops its provocations leading up to the Pyeongchang Olympics, it will greatly help in holding a safe Olympics," Moon said. "Also, it will help in creating a conducive atmosphere towards inter-Korean as well as US-North Korean dialogue."

Since becoming president in May, Moon has expressed a desire to see North Korea take part in the Pyeongchang Games, which open on 9 February, just 80km (50 miles) from the demilitarised zone, the heavily armed border that has divided North and South Korea since their 1950-53 conflict ended in a truce.

It is not clear what form any North Korean participation would take, however. The only two North Korean athletes to have qualified for the Games – the figure skating pair Ryom Tae-ok and Kim Ju-sik – missed the deadline to register for their event.

Moon said he believed North Korea would decide whether or not to take part “at the last minute”. He added that he did not believe North Korea would try to disrupt the Olympics, the first to be held on the Korean peninsula since the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul.

The US Olympic committee has said it will send a full team to Pyeongchang, after the US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, suggested US participation was an “open question”, due to concerns over athletes’ safety.

**Justin McCurry** in Tokyo

\* *The Guardian*. Wed 20 Dec '17 04.54 GMT Last modified on Wed 20 Dec '17 04.55 GMT:  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/20/south-korea-president-suggests-joint-drills-with-us-could-be-suspended>

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