

North Korea threatens to be 'world's most powerful nuclear, military state'

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Pyongyang's assertion of ambitions to global supremacy came on Friday after Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the Security Council, "The situation on the Korean Peninsula is the most tense and dangerous peace and security issue in the world today."

Pyongyang "will march forward and make great advancement victoriously as world's most powerful nuclear and military state upholding the line on simultaneous development of the Two Fronts," North Korea's Permanent Representative Ja Song-nam told the Security Council during a session on the threat from his country's nuclear and missile programmes.

The mention of "Two Fronts" is a reference to North Korea's theory of simultaneously developing its military capabilities, as well as its economy, which are both vulnerable to international sanctions.

With the characteristic bombast of his country's rhetoric, Ja dismissed the Council as "tool" of the US, which he said is "terrified by the incredible might of our republic".

He described the latest North Korean intercontinental ballistic missile test on November 29 as the "Great November Event" leading to "completing the state nuclear force" and "building a rocket power".

That missile, said to be capable of hitting targets anywhere in the US, landed off Japan's coast within its economic exclusive zone in its test flight.

While claiming to be marching towards becoming the world's most powerful military and nuclear state, Ja also asserted that Pyongyang "would not pose any threat to any country and region" as long as its interests were not threatened.

He asserted that his country could "fully guarantee" that there had been no "illegal transfer of nuclear weapons, its technology and weapon-grade nuclear materials".

He was, however, significantly silent about missile technology proliferation.

Pakistan has received missile technology from North Korea in exchange for nuclear technology in deals going back to the 1990s, which have been confirmed by US officials and documented by the US and international media.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who spoke before Ja reiterated Washington's warning that "all options are on the table" to contain North Korea's nuclear threat while offering to keep the lines of communication with Pyongyang open.

"The US will use all measures necessary to defend itself," Tillerson said. But he added, "We will meanwhile keep our channels of communication open."

Later speaking to reporters, Tillerson said that Washington would not accept any preconditions for talks with Pyongyang.

Referring to proposals by China and Russia for the US and South Korea to stop joint military activities in return for North Korea ceasing nuclear and missile activities, he said: "We do not accept a 'freeze-for-freeze' as a precondition to talks."

He added, "We do not accept any relaxing of the sanctions regime as a precondition of talks. We do not accept a resumption of humanitarian assistance as a precondition of talks."

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