

North Korea: Donald Trump ignores Angela Merkel's pleas against violence

US President Trump stepped up his warnings for North Korea despite German Chancellor Merkel condemning his "verbal escalation." The European Union has meanwhile called an extraordinary meeting to discuss its options.

US President Donald Trump on Friday brushed aside German Chancellor Angela Merkel's criticism of the increasing tension between the United States and North Korea, saying she did not speak for his country.

"Let her speak for Germany," Trump told reporters in New Jersey when asked about her comments.

"She's a very good friend of mine," Trump said. "Maybe she's referring to Germany, she's certainly not referring to the United States."

He then beefed up a warning he had earlier posted on Twitter, which said "military solutions" were "fully in place, locked and loaded, should North Korea act unwisely. Hopefully Kim Jong Un will find another path."

"I hope that they are fully going to understand the gravity of what I said and what I said is what I mean," Trump reiterated at his New Jersey golf resort, where he was holidaying. If Kim attacked Guam, Trump warned, "he will truly regret it and he will regret it fast."

Trump also said he would speak to Chinese President Xi Jinping on Friday and that the US was considering additional economic sanctions against North Korea.

Merkel had earlier Friday condemned the escalating rhetoric between Pyongyang and Washington, saying that Germany's government believed the conflict could not be solved by military means.

"Germany will very intensively take part in the options for resolution that are not military but I consider a verbal escalation to be the wrong response," Merkel told reporters in Berlin.

Merkel instead advocated an international diplomatic response.

"I don't see a military solution to this conflict," she said. "I see the need for enduring work at the UN Security Council... as well as tight cooperation between the countries involved, especially the US and China."

Her remarks echoed a statement released by her office quoting spokesman Steffen Seibert in which he also said the responsibility for the escalation lay with Pyongyang.

"Without the nuclear armament of North Korea the current situation would not have come to this," Seibert said.

EU calls extraordinary meeting

European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said she had called EU member states to an extraordinary meeting next week to discuss what action to take regarding North Korea, after meeting with the foreign ministers of various stakeholder countries on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in the Philippines.

"Following her talks ... Mogherini has decided to convene an extraordinary meeting of the Political and Security Committee on [Monday, August 14] to discuss possible next steps on the situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," her office said in a statement.

Russia pushes plan to defuse crisis

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov reiterated on Friday that Russia believes Pyongyang's possession of nuclear weapons is "unacceptable." He also warned the risk of a conflict breaking out is "very high" due to the recent war of words between Washington and Pyongyang.

"I believe the risks are very high, especially considering this rhetoric when direct threats of using force are voiced," he said, speaking live on state TV at youth forum for Russian students.

Lavrov also urged the US and North Korea to agree to a joint Russian-Chinese plan to de-escalate tensions. Under the plan, North Korea would halt its missile tests while the US and South Korea would impose a moratorium on large-scale military exercises.

The Russian minister added that “when it comes close to fight, the one who is stronger and wiser should be the first to step back from the brink.”

China’s Foreign Ministry also repeated its call for all parties to speak more cautiously and do more to diplomatically ease the situation.

Dangerous rhetoric

North Korean military officials said on Thursday that plans to launch missiles towards the US island territory of Guam would be ready by mid-August. Afterwards, they will be presented to the country’s leader Kim Jong Un.

The plans called for four intermediate-range missiles to fly over Japan and land in the sea 30-40 km (18-25 miles) from Guam, according to the North Korean report.

Earlier this week, Trump warned that the US would bring “fire and fury like the world has never seen” if it provoked the US again, which was followed by North Korea’s Guam threat.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula ramped up after Pyongyang carried out two intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launches last month.

The tests prompted the United Nations Security Council to unanimously pass its seventh round of UN sanctions that could cost North Korea \$1 billion (849 million euro) per year.

Source: <http://www.dw.com/en/north-korea-donald-trump-ignores-angela-merkels-pleas-against-violence/a-40056700>

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