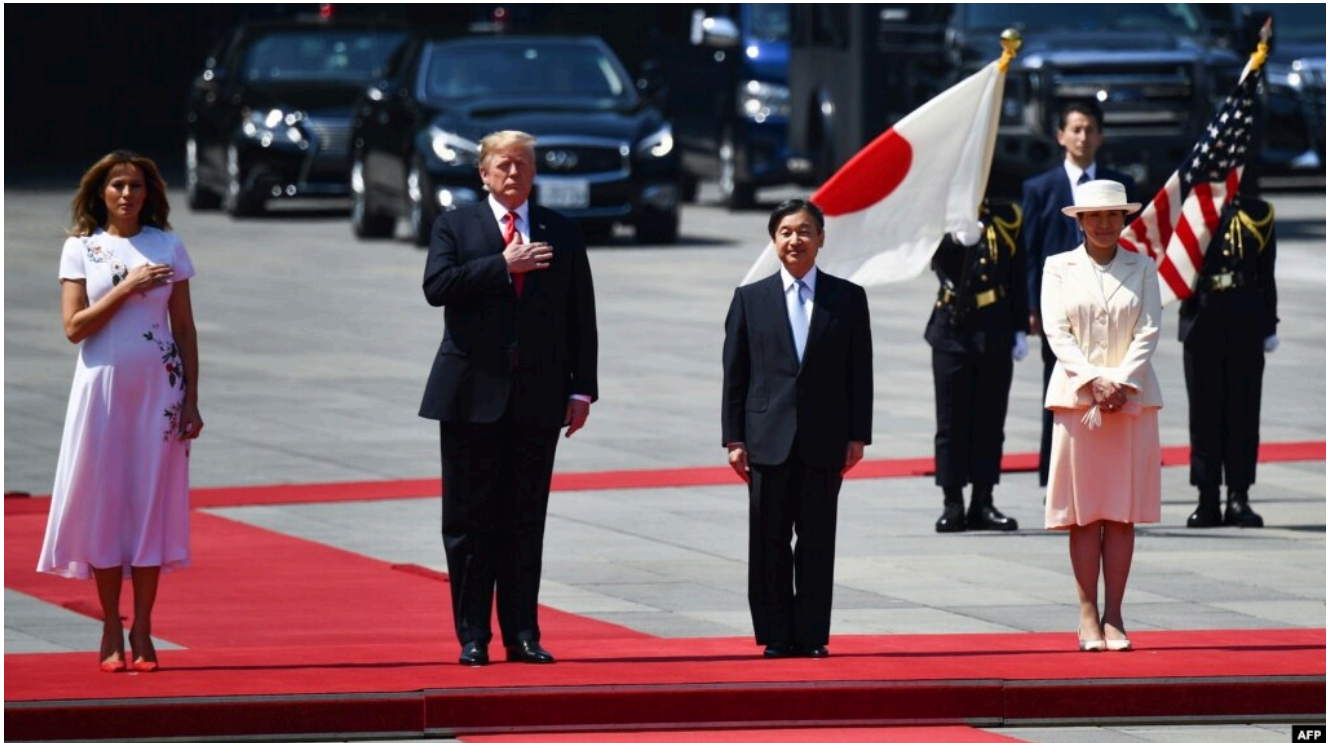


Trump Meets Japan's Emperor Naruhito at Imperial Palace



Left to right, first lady Melania Trump, U.S. President Donald Trump, Japan's Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako are seen at the the welcoming ceremony at the Imperial Palace, in Tokyo, Japan, May 27, 2019.

TOKYO —

U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday became the first foreign leader to meet with Japan's Emperor Naruhito, who ascended to the throne May 1.

Trump, who began a four-day visit to Japan on Saturday, started his formal visit on Monday, meeting with Naruhito and Empress Masako.

Trump and first lady Melania Trump took part in an elaborate welcoming ceremony at the Imperial Palace shortly after 9 a.m. local time.

The U.S. delegation was greeted at the palace by several dozen elementary schoolchildren waving Japanese and American flags. A military band played the U.S. "Star Spangled Banner" and Kimigayo anthems.

Later Monday, Trump will attend meetings at the Japanese state guest house, where he and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe are expected to discuss trade and defense matters.

No quick breakthrough on trade is expected although both leaders have expressed a desire for a bilateral trade pact after Trump pulled the United States out of the comprehensive 12-nation Trans-Pacific Partnership, which Tokyo had spearheaded with Washington under Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama.

Abe and Trump will hold a joint news conference Monday afternoon.

The emperor is hosting an imperial banquet at the palace Monday night.



U.S. President Donald Trump inspects a guard of honor during a welcoming ceremony for him and first lady Melania Trump at the Imperial Palace in Tokyo, Japan, May 27, 2019.

On Sunday, Trump and National Security Advisor John Bolton were publicly at odds about the seriousness of the threat currently posed by North Korea.

In a Sunday morning tweet from Tokyo, Trump issued a retort to Bolton who the previous day here had told reporters that there was “no doubt” North Korea’s recent test firing of short-range ballistic missiles violated a United Nations resolution.

Bolton's remark was the first by a U.S. official describing the North Korean launches as a violation of U.N. resolutions.

"North Korea fired off some small weapons which disturbed some of my people and others, but not me," said Trump in his tweet.



Donald J. Trump@realDonaldTrump

North Korea fired off some small weapons, which disturbed some of my people, and others, but not me. I have confidence that Chairman Kim will keep his promise to me, & also smiled when he called Swampman Joe Biden a low IQ individual, & worse. Perhaps that's sending me a signal?

Trump's tweet on North Korea caused confusion and consternation, not only within the administration but also among America's allies in the region, acknowledged senior White House officials traveling with the president

Some analysts say the missile launches are indeed a concern.

"It's pretty clear the missile launch was a violation of U.N. sanctions, whatever the range. The reality is that U.S. forces and civilians in South Korea and Japan are already in range of North Koreans missiles, so accepting shorter or mid-range missiles puts the United States at risk, not to mention our allies Japan and the Republic of Korea," Kevin Maher, a Washington security consultant and a former head of the State Department's Office of Japan Affairs, tells VOA. "These realities are inconvenient if the objective is to show a personal relationship with the dictator Kim Jung UN will stop North Korea's continuing nuclear and missile programs."

The U.S. president also expressed confidence the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, "will keep his promise to me" in moving towards denuclearization.

Trump in the tweet also said he smiled when Kim called former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden "a low IQ individual."



U.S. President Donald Trump, with first lady Melania Trump, receives a plate of food from a chef as they and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Akie Abe have a couples dinner in Tokyo, May 26, 2019.

The initial presidential tweet misspelled the Democratic Party presidential contender's name as "Bidan" and was later replaced. And it was not Kim who made the disparaging remark about Biden, rather an unsigned commentary carried by North Korea's central news agency, which referred to the American politician as a "fool of low IQ" and an "imbecile bereft of elementary quality as a human being."

Trump concluded his tweet by stating that perhaps Kim was trying "to send me a signal" — apparently a reference that the leader in Pyongyang prefers to negotiate with the current American president over the opposition party's top-polling contender.

Trump and Kim have held two summits - in Singapore and Hanoi. Neither has led to any significant breakthroughs although the meetings were seen as reducing tensions between the two countries which have no diplomatic relations and their

leaders had never met before.

The United States and North Korea were belligerents in a three-year war in the early 1950's which devastated the Korean peninsula. It ended with an armistice, but no peace treaty has ever been signed.

Bolton, who 13 months ago replaced retired Army General H.R. McMaster as the president's national security adviser, is known as a hardliner who distrusts Pyongyang's intentions.

North Korea has a long track record of violating international agreements and has repeatedly defied U.N. sanctions against its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

Before Trump departs Japan on Tuesday, he is to visit the naval base at Yokosuka to tour a Japanese helicopter carrier and address American service personnel in conjunction with the U.S. Memorial Day holiday (observed on Monday).

Source:

<https://www.voanews.com/a/trump-meets-japan-emperor-naruhito-at-imperial-palace/4933728.html>

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