

# At UN, Trump threatens ‘total destruction’ of North Korea

UNITED NATIONS — President Trump, in a combative debut speech to the U.N. General Assembly, threatened the “total destruction” of North Korea if it does not abandon its drive toward nuclear weapons.

Trump, who has ramped up his rhetoric throughout the escalating crisis with North Korea, told the murmuring crowd at the United Nations that “it is far past time for the nations of the world to confront” Kim Jong Un and said that Kim’s “reckless pursuit of nuclear weapons” poses a threat to “the entire world with an unthinkable loss of human life.”

“Rocket man is on a suicide mission for himself and his regime,” Trump said about the North Korean leader. He said of the U.S.: “If it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”

Trump, who has previously warned of “fire and fury” if Pyongyang does not back down, claimed that “no one has shown more contempt for other nations and for the well-being of their own people than the depraved regime in North Korea.” And he scolded nations that he said have enabled and traded with North Korea, seeming to slight China, though he did not mention it by name.

Elected on the nationalist slogan “America First,” Trump argued that individual nations should act in their own self-interest, yet rally together when faced with a common threat. In addition to North Korea, Trump urged nations to join together to stop Iran’s nuclear program — he declared the Iran nuclear deal an “embarrassment” for the United States — and defeat the “loser terrorists” who have committed violence across the globe. Iran’s government is a “reckless regime” that is running an “economically depleted rogue state,” whose chief export is “violence, bloodshed and chaos,” Trump said.

Iran’s semiofficial ISNA news agency responded by quoting Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. He called Trump’s speech “impudent and ignorant” comments that are divorced from reality, and ignore Iran’s role in fighting terrorism.

Iran has provided aid to Iraqi and Syrian forces battling the Islamic State, but is also a patron of Lebanon's Hezbollah, which Western countries view as a terrorist organization. Zarif condemned U.S. support for the "criminal Zionist regime" in Israel and for "tyrannical regimes" in the region.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, however, praised Trump's address, saying that in "over 30 years in my experience with the U.N., I never heard a bolder or more courageous speech." Trump "spoke the truth about the great dangers facing our world."

Trump then turned his attention briefly to communism, singling out Venezuela and Cuba for, he said, delivering only "anguish and failure" to their people. He threatened "further action" against Venezuela, promising not to lift sanctions against Cuba until the government in Havana makes fundamental reforms. "We cannot stand by and watch," Trump said.

Addressing the General Assembly is a milestone moment for any president, but one particularly significant for Trump, a relative newcomer to foreign policy who has at times rattled the international community with his unpredictability. He has pulled the United States out of multinational agreements, considered shrinking the U.S. military footprint in the world and deployed bombastic language on North Korea that has been criticized by other world leaders.

Trump frequently belittled the United Nations as a candidate, and some within his White House believe the United Nations acts as a global bureaucracy that infringes on the sovereignty of individual countries. But the president stood before world leaders and a global audience and declared that U.N. members, acting as a collection of self-interested nations, should unite to confront global dangers.

"I will always put American first. Just like you, the leaders of your countries, should always put your countries first," said Trump, who assured the United Nations that the United States would not abdicate its leadership position in the world but needed other countries to contribute more.

"The U.S. will forever be a great friend to the world and especially to its allies," the Republican president said. "But we can no longer be taken advantage of or enter into a one-sided deal in which the United States gets nothing in return."

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