

July 2, 2009

TO: Interested Parties

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RE: Talking Points for possible July 4 North Korea Missile Tests

Background

According to Japanese intelligence reports, North Korea is preparing to test launch a missile on the 4th of July, reportedly in the direction of Hawaii. While this test is belligerent, it does not present a real threat to the territory of the United States. The Korean missile has a maximum range of 4,000 miles, and Hawaii is more than 4,500 miles away. So while Americans are not in danger, there is no doubt that this test is an intentionally provocative act that, if successful, could generate significant public anger in the United States.

The Obama administration almost certainly will decline to respond to the test with a military strike, because doing so could easily lead to a full-scale war on the Korean Peninsula. Despite this extraordinary risk such an American military response would run, conservative commentators and political leaders already have signaled their intention to accuse the President and progressive members of Congress of weakness in response to North Korean provocation. Their rhetoric surely will be tough, but it will not be smart.

Set forth below are talking points articulating a tough and smart approach to North Korea's missile program and this belligerent missile test:

Talking Points

The President's Response to North Korea Has Been Tough

- President Obama has already taken tough action against North Korea's weapons program, pushing through the strictest sanctions ever imposed against North Korea, including the ability to freeze assets and examine ships thought to be moving weapons.
- The United States is currently tracking a North Korean ship believed to hold prohibited weapons.
- America will never back down from its commitment to allies in the region, and President Obama has already reaffirmed America's commitment to protect South Korea from a nuclear attack.

- President Obama appointed a special envoy to oversee American efforts regarding North Korea to ensure that they are as tough as possible. As one administration official put it: "We wanted somebody who woke up every morning and thought about nothing but sanctions implementation."ⁱ

Responding to North Korea's Missile Test without an Attack is Smart

- Calling on the President to conduct a military strike against North Korea is reckless and out of touch.
- There is a real likelihood that the North Koreans would respond with a catastrophic attack on South Korea. We cannot risk the lives of tens of thousands of American service members on the DMZ and millions of South Korean civilians with a risky and unnecessary military strike against a paranoid, unstable and nuclear-armed North Korean regime.
- Rather than bombing, the United States should respond to the missile test by working to eliminate North Korea's WMD weapons systems, maintaining sanctions that limit the threat it poses to the United States, and working with allies to ultimately see this dangerous regime removed from power.
- The Obama administration has been successful in working with the Chinese to strengthen sanctions against North Korea, and the Beijing government is beginning to view North Korea's actions just as dangerously as we do. The missile test will only strengthen this unity of purpose. We must use this convergence of interests as an opportunity to advance the security of ourselves and our allies in the region.

ⁱ Michael D. Shear and Glenn Kessler, "New North Korea Sanctions Team", *The Washington Post*, June 26, 2009. Available at:
http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2009/06/26/new_north_korea_sanctions_team.html?wprss=44