

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 26, 2017

The Honorable James Mattis
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Mattis:

Thank you for your service. President Trump has repeatedly threatened military force against North Korea, stating that the United States will use “fire and fury” and “totally destroy North Korea.”¹ We write in regards to U.S. military planning for such an attack. Specifically, we would like to know expected casualty assessments, how the United States would prevent devastating North Korean retaliation, and what plans the Department has for the humanitarian disaster that would follow any conflict.

To be clear, we believe it is wrong to use military force without first exhausting all other options, including diplomacy. We also believe it would be unconstitutional for the Administration to start a war with North Korea without Congressional authorization.

Sixteen years after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, we are still there with neither a military victory nor measurable improvements for the Afghan people to show for it. Afghanistan serves as a poignant lesson that military conflicts do not end following an attack. A decision to attack or invade another country will have ramifications for our troops and taxpayers, as well as the region, for decades.

As veterans, we know better than most how irresponsible it is to use military force without developing a strategy for how to win the fight and safeguard the interests of the United States in its aftermath. Despite being Members of the House Foreign Affairs and House Armed Services Committees who have participated in classified briefings and hearings on the North Korean threat, we have not heard detailed analysis of expected U.S. or allied force casualties, expected civilian casualties, what plans exist for the aftermath of a strike - including continuity of the South Korean Government, or how such assessments have factored into the military options presented to the President.

Declaring war and overseeing military action are two of the most fundamental duties of Congress. We therefore request that you provide answers to the following questions in the form of a written response and/or a classified briefing, as appropriate:

¹During his speech before the United Nations General Assembly on September 19, President Trump stated, “The United States has great strength and patience, but if it is forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea. Rocket Man is on a suicide mission for himself and for his regime.”

1. What are the best- and worst-case casualty estimates for the North Korean conventional and nuclear responses to a U.S. military attack? Include the following:
 - a. American Troops in South Korea
 - b. American civilians in South Korea
 - c. Non-U.S. Troops in South Korea
 - d. Non-U.S. citizens in South Korea
 - e. American Troops in Japan
 - f. American civilians in Japan
 - g. Non-U.S. Troops in Japan
 - h. Non-U.S. citizens in Japan
 - i. American Troops in Guam
 - j. American civilians in Guam
 - k. Non-U.S. citizens in Guam
2. Our intelligence of North Korea is limited. This Administration has been repeatedly surprised by developments in North Korea, including by technological advancements of the North Korean nuclear program. In addition, a recent Los Angeles Times article cast doubt on the notion that North Korea's nuclear weapons could be taken out in a single strike or that the regime is fragile.² Based on that reality:
 - a. What confidence does the Administration have that North Korea would be unable to retaliate with a nuclear weapon following a U.S. attack?
 - b. Would a ground invasion be necessary to locate and destroy all of North Korea's nuclear weapons?
3. Various reports state North Korea has potentially up to 5000 tons of chemical weapons and may possess biological weapons.
 - a. What confidence does the Administration have that North Korea would be unable to retaliate with chemical or biological weapons following a U.S. attack?
 - b. Would a ground invasion be necessary to locate and destroy all of North Korea's chemical and biological weapons?
4. What plan does the United States have for providing humanitarian aid to South Korea, Japan, and possibly the North Korean people during or after a military conflict with North Korea?
5. If the U.S. were to achieve a military victory in North Korea, what is the plan for the post-conflict future of that nation? How many U.S. forces would be required to manage the transition, and for what period of time?

² Barbara Demick, "Escalating tension has experts simulating a new Korean War, and the scenarios are sobering," *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 2017.

6. What happens if China or Russia opposes the U.S. use of military force against North Korea? What are U.S. plans to contain escalation not just by North Korea, but also by China and/or Russia?

Before this Administration leads America down the dark, bloody, and uncertain path of war with North Korea, the American people and their representatives in Congress deserve answers to the critical questions listed above.

We look forward to your response within 30 days of transmission of this letter. Thank you for your attention to this matter and for your service to the Nation.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu
Member, House Foreign Affairs Committee



Ruben Gallego
Member, House Armed Services Committee