

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 28, 2017

The Honorable Donald J. Trump  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write with deep concern about North Korea's dangerous behavior and acceleration of its nuclear weapon and ballistic missile programs, which threaten our national security. We urge you to appoint a Special Envoy to the Korean Peninsula in order to pursue a comprehensive strategy for addressing this grave threat.

A new report by the Pentagon's Defense Intelligence Agency indicates that North Korea could have a fully capable Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) by next year. Additionally, the dictatorship's most recent actions involving Otto Warmbier's death and the continued refinement of nuclear-capable ICBMs threaten the United States, our allies, and the peace and prosperity of the entire world. The United States cannot sit idly by as a dangerous dictator threatens our families, our freedoms, and America's standing in the world.

While it is clear that we must dismantle North Korea's nuclear, ballistic missile, and proliferation programs, we should have no illusions about how hard it will be given North Korea's long track record of belligerence and intransigence. The United States should pursue a holistic strategy drawing on all elements of our national power, including further economic sanctions and investments in deterrent and defensive capabilities that would make North Korea think twice before threatening us or our allies. Equally crucially, we must also enhance the U.S. position by tightening our regional focus. This is why we strongly urge you to appoint a special envoy tasked with easing regional tensions while also utilizing the full toolkit of the U.S. government to resolve the current crisis. Such an envoy should be empowered to speak with one voice regarding U.S. efforts to mitigate North Korea's threats to America's democracy and freedom, while also bringing regional powers and allies to the table.

Based on our observations, your Administration's strategy to address the ongoing problems in North Korea is not immediately clear nor has it halted North Korea's rapid development of nuclear weapons and rocket technology. Critical positions to address such threats within the State Department, including the Ambassador to the Republic of Korea and the Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, remain unoccupied. Moreover, key State Department special envoy, representative, and coordinator positions remain unfilled, including the Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Issues, the Special Envoy for Six Party Talks, and the Under Secretary for Arms Control and International Security Affairs. There also remain key vacancies in the Department of Defense, including the Under Secretary for Policy and the

Assistant Secretary for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs, both of whom are critical to an effective operational policy stance toward North Korea.

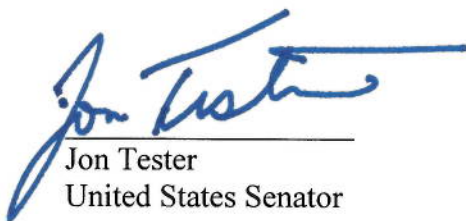
For these reasons, it is necessary for your administration to prioritize a regional strategy by appointing a Special Envoy to the Korean Peninsula in order to ensure the safety and security of American lives. Much as former Ambassador Richard Holbrooke was empowered as a private citizen to coordinate strategy and U.S. government resources in the Balkans, a similarly empowered coordinator is needed to address the escalating situation in North Korea.

The appointment of a Special Envoy to the Korean Peninsula would not only emphasize the importance of the position within the administration, but would represent a significant symbolic and functional shift toward U.S. leadership in the region. Symbolically, such an appointment would reassure our allies in South Korea and Japan that the U.S. commitment to their security is unwavering. We agree that “strategic patience” is not a suitable course of action and instead we should exhaust every diplomatic tool our country has at its disposal.

According to reports, you informed South Korea’s presidential envoy that your administration was willing to attempt to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue through engagement, should the right conditions apply. We hope your willingness to agree to talks, with conditions, allows for a different approach from years past and includes new partners with new responsibilities and an updated mission.

We urge you to quickly lead this effort as our Commander in Chief and build the team of diplomats and policy advisors that will address the escalating problems in North Korea. We look forward to working with you to ensure the safety and security of U.S. citizens and our allies in East Asia and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester  
United States Senator



Heidi Heitkamp  
United States Senator