

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA | SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Assembly Speaker Chung, distinguished members of this Assembly, ladies and gentlemen: Thank you for the extraordinary privilege to speak in this great chamber and to address your people on behalf of the people of the United States of America.

In our short time in your country, Melania and I have been awed by its ancient and modern wonders, and we are deeply moved by the warmth of your welcome.

Last night, President and Mrs. Moon showed us incredible hospitality in a beautiful reception at the Blue House. We had productive discussions on increasing military cooperation and improving the trade relationship between our nations on the principle of fairness and reciprocity.

Through this entire visit, it has been both our pleasure and our honor to create and celebrate a long friendship between the United States and the Republic of Korea.

This alliance between our nations was forged in the crucible of war, and strengthened by the trials of history. From the Inchon landings to Pork Chop Hill, American and South Korean soldiers have fought together, sacrificed together, and triumphed together.

Almost 67 years ago, in the spring of 1951, they recaptured what remained of this city where we are gathered so proudly today. It was the second time in a year that our combined forces took on steep casualties to retake this capital from the communists.

Over the next weeks and months, the men soldiered through steep mountains and bloody, bloody battles. Driven back at times, they willed their way north to form the line that today divides the oppressed and the free. And there, American and South Korean troops have remained together holding that line for nearly seven decades. (Applause.)

By the time the armistice was signed in 1953, more than 36,000 Americans had died in the Korean War, with more than 100,000 others very badly wounded. They are heroes, and we honor them. We also honor and remember the terrible price the people of your country paid for their freedom. You lost hundreds of thousands of brave soldiers and countless innocent civilians in that gruesome war.

Much of this great city of Seoul was reduced to rubble. Large portions of the country were scarred -- severely, severely hurt -- by this horrible war. The economy of this nation was demolished.

But as the entire world knows, over the next two generations something miraculous happened on the southern half of this peninsula. Family by family, city by city, the people of South Korea built this country into what is today one of the great nations of the world. And I congratulate you. (Applause.) In less than one lifetime, South Korea climbed from total devastation to among the wealthiest nations on Earth.

Today, your economy is more than 350 times larger than what it was in 1960. Trade has increased 1,900 times. Life expectancy has risen from just 53 years to more than 82 years today.

Like Korea, and since my election exactly one year ago today, I celebrate with you. (Applause.) The United States is going through something of a miracle itself. Our stock market is at an all-time high. Unemployment is at a 17-year low. We are defeating ISIS. We are strengthening our judiciary, including a brilliant Supreme Court justice, and on, and on, and on.

Currently stationed in the vicinity of this peninsula are the three largest aircraft carriers in the world loaded to the maximum with magnificent F-35 and F-18 fighter jets. In addition, we have nuclear submarines appropriately positioned. The United States, under my administration, is completely rebuilding its military and is spending hundreds of billions of dollars to the newest and finest military equipment anywhere in the world being built, right now. I want peace through strength. (Applause.)

We are helping the Republic of Korea far beyond what any other country has ever done. And, in the end, we will work things out far better than anybody understands or can even appreciate. I know that the Republic of Korea, which has become a tremendously successful nation, will be a faithful ally of the United States very long into the future. (Applause.)

What you have built is truly an inspiration. Your economic transformation was linked to a political one. The proud, sovereign, and independent people of your nation demanded the right to govern themselves. You secured free parliamentary elections in 1988, the same year you hosted your first Olympics.

after, you elected your first civilian president in more than three decades. And when the Republic you won faced financial crisis, you lined up by the millions to give your most prized possessions -- your wedding rings, heirlooms, and gold "luck keys" -- to restore the promise of a better future for your children. (Applause.)

Your wealth is measured in more than money -- it is measured in achievements of the mind and achievements of spirit. Over the last several decades, your scientists of engineers -- have engineered so many magnificent things. You've pushed the boundaries of technology, pioneered miraculous medical treatments, and emerged as leaders in unlocking the mysteries of our universe.

Korean authors penned roughly 40,000 books this year. Korean musicians fill concert halls all around the world. Young Korean students graduate from college at the highest rates of any country. And Korean golfers are some of the best on Earth. (Applause.)

fact -- and you know what I'm going to say -- the Women's U.S. Open was held this year at Trump National Golf Club in Bedminster, New Jersey, and it just happened to be won by a great Korean golfer, Sung-hyun Park. An eighth of the top 10 players were from Korea. And the top four golfers -- one, two, three, four -- the top four were from Korea. Congratulations. (Applause.) Congratulations. And that's something. That is really something.

Here in Seoul, architectural wonders like the Sixty-Three Building and the Lotte World Tower -- very beautiful -- grace the sky and house the workers of many growing industries.

citizens now help to feed the hungry, fight terrorism, and solve problems all over the world. And in a few months, you will host the world and you will do a magnificent job at the 23rd Olympic Winter Games. Good luck. (Applause.)

The Korean miracle extends exactly as far as the armies of free nations advanced in 1953 -- 24 miles to the north. There, it stops; it all comes to an end. Dead stop. The flourishing ends, and the prison state of North Korea sadly begins.

Workers in North Korea labor grueling hours in unbearable conditions for almost no pay. Recently, the entire working population was ordered to work for 70 days straight, or else pay for a day of rest.

Families live in homes without plumbing, and fewer than half have electricity. Parents bribe teachers in hopes of saving their sons and daughters from forced labor. More than a million North Koreans died of famine in the 1990s, and more continue to die of hunger today.

Among children under the age of five, nearly 30 percent of afflicted -- and are afflicted by stunted growth due to malnutrition. And yet, in 2012 and 2013, the regime spent an estimated \$200 million -- or almost half the money that it allocated to improve living standards for its people -- to instead build even more monuments, towers, and statues to glorify its dictators.

What remains of the meager harvest of the North Korean economy is distributed according to perceived loyalty to a twisted regime. Far from valuing its people as equal citizens, this cruel dictatorship measures them, scores them, and ranks them based on the most arbitrary indications of their allegiance to the state. Those who score the highest in loyalty may live in the capital city. Those who score the lowest starve. A small infraction by one citizen, such as accidentally staining a picture of the tyrant printed in a discarded newspaper, can wreck the social credit rank of his entire family for many decades.

An estimated 100,000 North Koreans suffer in gulags, toiling in forced labor, and enduring torture, starvation, rape, and murder on a constant basis.

In one known instance, a 9-year-old boy was imprisoned for 10 years because his grandfather was accused of treason. In another, a student was beaten in school for forgetting a single detail about the life of Kim Jong-un.

Soldiers have kidnapped foreigners and forced them to work as language tutors for North Korean spies.

In the part of Korea that was a stronghold for Christianity before the war, Christians and other people of faith who are found praying or holding a religious book of any kind are now detained, tortured, and in many cases, even executed.

North Korean women are forced to abort babies that are considered ethnically inferior. And if these babies are born, the newborns are murdered.

One woman's baby born to a Chinese father was taken away in a bucket. The guards said it did not "deserve to live because it was impure."

So why would China feel an obligation to help North Korea?

The horror of life in North Korea is so complete that citizens pay bribes to government officials to have themselves exported abroad as slaves. They would rather be slaves than live in North Korea.

To attempt to flee is a crime punishable by death. One person who escaped remarked, "When I think about it now, I was not a human being. I was more like an animal. Only after leaving North Korea did I realize what life was supposed to be."

And so, on this peninsula, we have watched the results of a tragic experiment in a laboratory of history. It is a tale of one people, but two Koreas. One Korea in which the people took control of their lives and their country, and chose a future of freedom and justice, of civilization, and incredible achievement. And another Korea in which leaders imprison their people under the banner of tyranny, fascism, and oppression. The result of this experiment are in, and they are totally conclusive.

When the Korean War began in 1950, the two Koreas were approximately equal in GDP per capita. But by the 1990s, South Korea's wealth had surpassed North Korea's by more than 10 times. And today, the South's economy is over 40 times larger. You started the same a short while ago, and now you're 40 times larger. You're doing something right.

Considering the misery wrought by the North Korean dictatorship, it is no surprise that it has been forced to take increasingly desperate measures to prevent its people from understanding this brutal contrast.

Because the regime fears the truth above all else, it forbids virtually all contact with the outside world. Not just my speech today, but even the most commonplace facts of South Korean life are forbidden knowledge to the North Korean people. Western and South Korean music is banned. Possession of foreign media is a crime punishable by death. Citizens spy on fellow citizens, their homes are subject to search at any time, and their every action is subject to surveillance. In place of a vibrant society, the people of North Korea are bombarded by state propaganda practically every waking hour of the day.

North Korea is a country ruled as a cult. At the center of this military cult is a deranged belief in the leader's destiny to rule as parent protector over a conquered Korean Peninsula and an enslaved Korean people.

The more successful South Korea becomes, the more decisively you discredit the dark fantasy

at the heart of the Kim regime.

In this way, the very existence of a thriving South Korean republic threatens the very survival of the North Korean dictatorship.

This city and this assembly are living proof that a free and independent Korea not only can, but does stand strong, sovereign, and proud among the nations of the world. (Applause.)

Here, the strength of the nation does not come from the false glory of a tyrant. It comes from the true and powerful glory of a strong and great people -- the people of the Republic of Korea -- a Korean people who are free to live, to flourish, to worship, to love, to build, and to grow their own destiny.

In this Republic, the people have done what no dictator ever could -- you took, with the help of the United States, responsibility for yourselves and ownership of your future. You had a dream -- a Korean dream -- and you built that dream into a great reality.

In so doing, you performed the miracle on the Hahn that we see all around us, from the stunning skyline of Seoul to the plains and peaks of this beautiful landscape. You have done it freely, you have done it happily, and you have done it in your own very beautiful way.

This reality -- this wonderful place -- your success is the greatest cause of anxiety, alarm, and even panic to the North Korean regime. That is why the Kim regime seeks conflict abroad -- to distract from total failure that they suffer at home.

Since the so-called armistice, there have been hundreds of North Korean attacks on Americans and South Koreans. These attacks have included the capture and torture of the brave American soldiers of the USS Pueblo, repeated assaults on American helicopters, and the 1969 drowning [downing] of a U.S. surveillance plane that killed 31 American servicemen. The regime has made numerous lethal incursions in South Korea, attempted to assassinate senior leaders, attacked South Korean ships, and tortured Otto Warmbier, ultimately leading to that fine young man's death.

All the while, the regime has pursued nuclear weapons with the deluded hope that it could blackmail its way to the ultimate objective. And that objective we are not going to let it have. We are not going to let it have. All of Korea is under that spell, divided in half. South Korea will never allow what's going on in North Korea to continue to happen.

The North Korean regime has pursued its nuclear and ballistic missile programs in defiance of every assurance, agreement, and commitment it has made to the United States and its allies. It's broken all of those commitments. After promising to freeze its plutonium program in 1994, it repeated [reaped] the benefits of the deal and then -- and then immediately continued its illicit nuclear activities.

In 2005, after years of diplomacy, the dictatorship agreed to ultimately abandon its nuclear programs and return to the Treaty on Non-Proliferation. But it never did. And worse, it tested the

very weapons it said it was going to give up. In 2009, the United States gave negotiations yet another chance, and offered North Korea the open hand of engagement. The regime responded by sinking a South Korean Navy ship, killing 46 Korean sailors. To this day, it continues to launch missiles over the sovereign territory of Japan and all other neighbors, test nuclear devices, and develop ICBMs to threaten the United States itself. The regime has interpreted America's past restraint as weakness. This would be a fatal miscalculation. This is a very different administration than the United States has had in the past.

Today, I hope I speak not only for our countries, but for all civilized nations, when I say to the North: Do not underestimate us, and do not try us. We will defend our common security, our shared prosperity, and our sacred liberty.

We did not choose to draw here, on this peninsula -- (applause) -- this magnificent peninsula -- the thin line of civilization that runs around the world and down through time. But here it was drawn, and here it remains to this day. It is the line between peace and war, between decency and depravity, between law and tyranny, between hope and total despair. It is a line that has been drawn many times, in many places, throughout history. To hold that line is a choice free nations have always had to make. We have learned together the high cost of weakness and the high stakes of its defense.

America's men and women in uniform have given their lives in the fight against Nazism, imperialism, Communism and terrorism.

America does not seek conflict or confrontation, but we will never run from it. History is filled with discarded regimes that have foolishly tested America's resolve.

Anyone who doubts the strength or determination of the United States should look to our past, and you will doubt it no longer. We will not permit America or our allies to be blackmailed or attacked. We will not allow American cities to be threatened with destruction. We will not be intimidated. And we will not let the worst atrocities in history be repeated here, on this ground, we fought and died so hard to secure. (Applause.)

That is why I have come here, to the heart of a free and flourishing Korea, with a message for the peace-loving nations of the world: The time for excuses is over. Now is the time for strength. If you want peace, you must stand strong at all times. (Applause.) The world cannot tolerate the menace of a rogue regime that threatens with nuclear devastation.

All responsible nations must join forces to isolate the brutal regime of North Korea -- to deny it and any form -- any form of it. You cannot support, you cannot supply, you cannot accept. We call on every nation, including China and Russia, to fully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions, downgrade diplomatic relations with the regime, and sever all ties of trade and technology.

It is our responsibility and our duty to confront this danger together -- because the longer we wait, the greater the danger grows, and the fewer the options become. (Applause.) And to those

nations that choose to ignore this threat, or, worse still, to enable it, the weight of this crisis is on your conscience.

I also have come here to this peninsula to deliver a message directly to the leader of the North Korean dictatorship: The weapons you are acquiring are not making you safer. They are putting your regime in grave danger. Every step you take down this dark path increases the peril you face.

North Korea is not the paradise your grandfather envisioned. It is a hell that no person deserves. Yet, despite every crime you have committed against God and man, you are ready to offer, and we will do that -- we will offer a path to a much better future. It begins with an end to the aggression of your regime, a stop to your development of ballistic missiles, and complete, verifiable, and total denuclearization. (Applause.)

A sky-top view of this peninsula shows a nation of dazzling light in the South and a mass of impenetrable darkness in the North. We seek a future of light, prosperity, and peace. But we are only prepared to discuss this brighter path for North Korea if its leaders cease their threats and dismantle their nuclear program.

The sinister regime of North Korea is right about only one thing: The Korean people do have a glorious destiny, but they could not be more wrong about what that destiny looks like. The destiny of the Korean people is not to suffer in the bondage of oppression, but to thrive in the glory of freedom. (Applause.)

What South Koreans have achieved on this peninsula is more than a victory for your nation. It is a victory for every nation that believes in the human spirit. And it is our hope that, someday soon, all of your brothers and sisters of the North will be able to enjoy the fullest of life intended by God.

Your republic shows us all of what is possible. In just a few decades, with only the hard work, courage, and talents of your people, you turned this war-torn land into a nation blessed with wealth, rich in culture, and deep in spirit. You built a home where all families can flourish and where all children can shine and be happy.

This Korea stands strong and tall among the great community of independent, confident, and peace-loving nations. We are nations that respect our citizens, cherish our liberty, treasure our sovereignty, and control our own destiny. We affirm the dignity of every person and embrace the full potential of every soul. And we are always prepared to defend the vital interests of our people against the cruel ambition of tyrants.

Together, we dream of a Korea that is free, a peninsula that is safe, and families that are reunited once again. We dream of highways connecting North and South, of cousins embracing cousins, and this nuclear nightmare replaced with the beautiful promise of peace.

Until that day comes, we stand strong and alert. Our eyes are fixed to the North, and our

hearts praying for the day when all Koreans can live in freedom. (Applause.)

Thank you. (Applause.) God Bless You. God Bless the Korean people. Thank you very much.
Thank you. (Applause.)