

# De-Escalate the North Korea Nuclear Crisis NOW! by the Rev. Robert Moore

President Trump's UN speech threatening the "total destruction" of North Korea has led to a dramatic escalation of cascading tensions and counter-threats. North Korea subsequently has threatened to do an atmospheric H-Bomb test and to shoot down American aircraft like those that just flew near their border. They actually shot down a US aircraft in 1969, so this should not be taken as an idle threat.



Through miscalculation and foreclosing options to de-escalate, such a war of words could well escalate into actual war, even nuclear war. Retired four-star General Barry McCaffrey recently estimated the **chances of the current cycle of escalation leading to nuclear war at one to two percent!** When it comes to the danger of nuclear holocaust, it would be such an unimaginable catastrophe that we can't accept these odds.

The assertion that diplomacy with North Korea hasn't ever worked is false. A previous crisis was stopped by a 1994 Agreement made after former President Carter went to North Korea to open talks. As a result, **more than 100 bombs worth of plutonium was prevented from being produced by North Korea over the next 12 years.**

That agreement faltered due to bad faith gestures on both sides, including former President George W. Bush labeling North Korea part of the "axis of evil" in a State of the Union address. It's time to immediately send President Carter, or Gov. Bill Richardson to jump-start an urgent de-escalation of the crisis.

The most effective way to prevent nuclear war is to engage in sustained, tough diplomacy, such as the two years of negotiation that led to the 2015 Iran Nuclear Agreement, which is verifiably being implemented to date. Yet President Trump is threatening to torpedo that agreement, severely undermining the chances that North Korea would negotiate another nuclear agreement.

**The last time the risk of nuclear war was this high was the Cuban missile crisis, and miscalculation came dangerously close to causing a nuclear war.** President Kennedy's military advisors urged an invasion of Cuba. He resisted, saying that such an attack would be perceived as "a Pearl Harbor in reverse." If he had ordered the invasion, we now know that low level commanders on the ground were pre-authorized to use nuclear weapons, and there would have been nuclear war.

Any attack, possibly even just military exercises, aimed at North Korea would certainly lead to catastrophic war, including artillery fire at South Korea, bombarding US military installations, and sending troops from its fourth largest military in the world across the border. Given that some of North Korea's estimated 20-60 nuclear warheads are very likely to survive such a strike, the worst-case scenario is utterly terrifying.

**History shows that major shifts toward diplomacy only happen when average citizens take effective action in large numbers.** When mothers protested atmospheric nuclear testing, President Kennedy announced a US nuclear testing moratorium and turned it into the verifiable Partial Test Ban Treaty in just 50 days! When millions mobilized against former President Reagan's nuclear recklessness, he was forced to return to negotiations with the Soviets and the first nuclear reduction treaty in history resulted in 1987.

We need a major mobilization of people-power to advocate de-escalation NOW. President Trump said previously that he might be willing to meet with North Korea's leader over a hamburger. He needs to vigorously take that approach NOW. It's imperative that all people of good will to urgently take action(s) NOW, even if other matters normally take priority! **Polls show that 2/3 of Americans want diplomacy with North Korea,** but we need to act on that for it to have an impact.

Based on my nearly four decades of full time peacemaking leadership, I urge readers to:

- 1) **Contact your Congresspersons** urging them to publicly call for Diplomacy, Not War with North Korea. Reach them through the Capitol Switchboard (202) 224-3121 or visit [peacecoalition.org](http://peacecoalition.org) to send them emails.
- 2) **Inform yourself and others,** visit [peacecoalition.org](http://peacecoalition.org) or call (609) 924-5022 for resources. Then write letters to the editor, call radio talk shows, make your views known on social media and other platforms.
- 3) **Become active in the ongoing work of the Coalition for Peace Action or the peace group closest to you.** Elected officials are moved by organized groups of people pressing them.