

Tillerson: Pre-emptive force an option with N. Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States signaled a tougher strategy toward North Korea on Friday that leaves open the possibility of pre-emptive military action and rejects talks with the communist nation until it gives up its weapons of mass destruction.

“Let me be very clear: the policy of strategic patience has ended,” said Secretary of State Rex Tillerson. “We are exploring a new range of diplomatic, security and economic measures. All options are on the table.”

Tillerson was speaking after visiting the heavily militarized border between the rival Koreas. His comments are likely to displease Beijing, where he travels this weekend. China has been advocating diplomacy to avoid a conflict on the divided peninsula.

Also Friday, President



Jung Yeon-Je/Pool Photo via AP
U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, left, looks on South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se during a press conference in Seoul Friday.

Donald Trump tweeted: “North Korea is behaving very badly. They have been ‘playing’ the United States for years. China has done little to help!”

Past U.S. administrations have considered military options against North Korea

and have publicly said that an attack on the U.S. or its allies would prompt a devastating response.

Tillerson’s comments were unusual, however, as he appeared to be implying, in public, that the U.S. would consider military force as a

way of preventing an attack by Pyongyang, and not just as a means of retaliation. It also comes amid a greater sense of urgency about the threat because of North Korea’s rapid progress toward developing the means to strike the U.S. with a nuclear-tipped missile. Risks of military action are high as North Korea could unleash a massive artillery barrage on Seoul in retaliation.

The Trump administration says it is conducting a review of North Korea policy. At a news conference in Seoul, alongside his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se, Tillerson said U.S. was exploring the new range of diplomatic, security and economic measures and emphasized that Obama administration’s policy of “strategic patience”— that saw tightening of sanctions to try and get North Korea back

to negotiations aimed at denuclearization — had ended.

Asked about the possibility of using military force against North Korea, he said, “all of the options are on the table.”

Tillerson said the U.S. does not want a military conflict, “but obviously if North Korea takes actions that threaten South Korean forces or our own forces that would be met with (an) appropriate response. If they elevate the threat of their weapons program to a level that we believe requires action that option is on the table.”

Former members of the Clinton administration have said that the U.S. considered a strike on a North Korean nuclear facility in 1994 when it appeared on the brink of producing weapons-grade fissile material and refused U.N. inspections. A diplomatic deal was struck to avert

conflict.

Since then, North Korea has violated multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions and has been undeterred by tough international sanctions. The North conducted two nuclear test explosions and 24 ballistic missile tests last year. Last week, after the U.S. and South Korea began annual military drills that the North views as rehearsal for invasion, it test-fired four missiles into seas off Japan.

Central to the U.S. review is China and its role in any bid to persuade Pyongyang to change course. China remains North Korea’s most powerful ally and dominant trading partner. China recently announced it was suspending coal imports that are an important source of revenue for North Korea for the rest of the year in adherence with U.N. sanctions.

Peru flood death toll climbs to 67

By FRANKLIN BRICENO
Associated Press

LIMA, Peru — The number of people killed in Peru following intense rains and mudslides wreaking havoc around the Andean nation climbed to 67 Friday, with thousands more displaced from destroyed homes and others waiting on rooftops for rescue.

Across the country overflowing rivers caused by El Nino rains damaged 115,000 homes, collapsed 117 bridges and paralyzed countless roadways.

“We are confronting a serious climatic problem,” President Pedro Pablo Kuczynski said in a statement broadcast live Friday afternoon. “There hasn’t been an incident of this strength along the coast of Peru since 1998.”

The highly unusual rains follow a series of storms that have struck especially hard along Peru’s northern coast, with voracious waters inundating hospitals and cemeteries, and leaving some small villages entirely isolated. On Thursday, the National Police rescued eight people who had been trapped for three days in Cachipampa and removed the body of an 88-year-old man killed in the floods. In the highlands along the department of La Libertad, dramatic video showed crashing water inundating several buses and trucks, killing at least five people. Rescuers were searching



AP Photo/Martin Mejia
A woman is pulled to safety in a zipline harness in Lima, Peru, Friday. Intense rains and mudslides over the past three days have wrought havoc around the Andean nation and caught residents in Lima, a desert city of 10 million where it almost never rains, by surprise.

Friday for survivors.

Even Peru’s capital city of Lima, where a desert climate seldom leads to rain, police had to help hundreds of residents in an outskirt neighborhood cross a flooded road by sending them one-by-one along a rope through choppy waters. The muddy current channeled down the street after a major river overflowed. Some residents left their homes with just a single plastic bag carrying their belongings.

In total, more than 65,000 people in nearby Huachipa were unable to either go to work or return to their properties.

“There’s no way to cross,”

said Henry Obando, who was rescued after leaving the factory where he works and making his way toward a rooftop where officers created a zip-line to cross. “Many people are trying to get to their homes.”

The storms are being caused by a warms of the surface waters in the Pacific Ocean and are expected to continue for another two weeks. Kuczynski declared Peru’s Central Highway in a state of emergency Friday and announced he would be boosting funds for reconstruction. He said he was optimistic the country was in a strong position

to make a swift recovery but urged residents to use caution.

“This hasn’t ended,” he warned. “And it will continue for some time more.”

In 1998, another El Nino event brought heavy rainfall to the nation’s coast, causing landslides, ripping apart homes and leaving hundreds dead.

On Friday, drinking water was cut off throughout most of Lima, spiking the price for bottled water and creating long lines at city tanks. U.S. Embassy helicopters typically used to eradicate coca crops in the Amazon were redirected to help in rescue efforts.

Military attack kills 42 Somali refugees off Yemen’s coast

HODEIDA, Yemen (AP)

— The boat packed with dozens of Somali refugees was more than 30 miles off war-torn Yemen’s coast when a military vessel and a helicopter gunship swooped in, opening fire in the dead of night Friday, killing at least 42 people. The attack, which Yemen’s Shiite rebels blamed on a Saudi-led coalition, highlighted the perils of a heavily used migration route running from the Horn of Africa to the oil-rich Gulf, right through Yemen’s civil war.

The coalition has been heavily bombarding the nearby coast around the Yemeni port of Hodeida, where it accuses the rebels, known as Houthis, of smuggling weapons in small boats. There was no immediate coalition comment.

A Yemeni trafficker who survived the attack said the boat was filled with Somali refugees, including women and children, who were trying to reach Sudan from Yemen, which has been racked by conflict for more than two years.

Al-Hassan Ghaleb Mohammed told The Associated Press the boat left from Ras Arra, along the southern coastline in Yemen’s Hodeida province, and was 30 miles off the coast, near the Bab al-Mandab strait, when the military vessel opened fire, followed by the

helicopter gunship.

He described a scene of panic in which the terrified refugees waved flashlights, apparently to show they were not combatants. He said the helicopter then stopped firing, but only after dozens had been killed. Mohammed was unharmed in the attack.

Video of the aftermath showed dozens of slain migrants, along with others who suffered gunshot wounds, lost limbs, or had broken arms and legs.

The U.N. refugee agency said on its Twitter account that it was “appalled by this tragic incident, the latest in which civilians continue to disproportionately bear the brunt of conflict in Yemen.”

A top official with the U.N.’s migration agency said 42 bodies were recovered from the attack, which took place around 3 a.m. Friday. Mohammed Abdiker, emergencies director at the International Organization for Migration in Geneva, called the assault “totally unacceptable” and said those responsible should have checked who was aboard the boat before firing on it. He said about 75 men and 15 women who survived the attack were taken to detention centers, and some bodies were laid in a fish market in Hodeida because of a lack of space in mortuaries.



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