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Donald Trump says China's efforts to rein in North Korea have 'not worked'



Xi Jinping and Donald Trump CREDIT: AP

By **Neil Connor**, BEIJING and **Nick Allen**, WASHINGTON

20 JUNE 2017 • 11:43PM

President Donald Trump said efforts by China to rein in North Korea have "not worked," signaling he may take a more aggressive approach to counter the hermit kingdom and its nuclear ambitions.

Mr Trump made the announcement as he also appeared to blame his predecessor Barack Obama over the death of Otto Warmbier, 22, the US student who died after being imprisoned for 17 months in North Korea.

The tour agency that brought Mr Warmbier to North Korea, operated largely by British ex-patriates in China, said it would stop taking Americans into the reclusive state.

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Young Pioneer Tours had previously described North Korea as "probably one of the safest places on Earth to visit". However, the agency said it been "struggling to process" what happened to Mr Warmbier and the "risk for Americans visiting North Korea has become too high".

Mr Trump had previously praised the efforts of Chinese president Xi Jinping(<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/07/donald-trump-kept-show-going-dinner-xi-jinping-missiles-flew/>) to put pressure on North Korea after the two men met at the president's Mar-a-Lago retreat in Florida in April.

But after the death of Mr Warmbier he said: "While I greatly appreciate the efforts of President Xi and China to help with North Korea, it has not worked out. At least I know China tried!"



Donald J. Trump

@realDonaldTrump

While I greatly appreciate the efforts of President Xi & China to help with North Korea, it has not worked out. At least I know China tried!

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Mr Warmbier had been sentenced to 15 years hard labour after he tearfully confessed to trying to steal a propaganda banner. He was returned to the US last week in a coma and died days later.

Mr Trump said: "It's a total disgrace what happened to Otto. It should never, ever be allowed to happen. And frankly, if he were brought home sooner, I think the results would have been a lot different. He should have been brought home that same day."

Asked if Mr Trump was blaming Mr Obama the White House press secretary Sean Spicer said: "I think when you realise what happened the president believed that, had it happened sooner and quicker, potentially there might have been additional medical resources that could have been provided.

"He's saddened by this whole situation and would have hoped it could have been resolved sooner."

The US State Department said it was holding North Korea accountable for its treatment of Mr Warmbier and three other US citizens detained by Pyongyang to be freed as soon as possible.

The Trump administration was also considering banning travel by US citizens to North Korea.

Mr Obama rejected the apparent criticism by Mr Trump.

In a statement Mr Obama's spokesman Ned Price said: "During the course of the Obama administration we had no higher priority than securing the release of Americans detained overseas.

"Tireless efforts resulted in the release of at least 10 Americans from North Korean custody.

“It is painful that Mr Warmbier was not among them but our efforts on his behalf never ceased, even in the waning days of the administration.”

Mr Warmbier's father, Fred Warmbier, has previously criticised the efforts of the Obama administration to secure his son's release.

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