

Beat: Politics

N. Korea puts artillery forces targeting U.S. bases at highest alert

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USPA News - North Korea said Tuesday it has put its artillery and rocket forces at their highest alert after nuclear-capable B-52 bombers participated in ongoing South Korea-U.S. drills, military officials said, warning that the Korean Peninsula is moving closer to war. The Korean People's Army (KPA) issued the statement after the B-52 bombers flew through South Korean airspace on Monday morning.

"The U.S. nuclear war racket has gone beyond the danger line and entered the phase of an actual war, defying the repeated warnings from the army and people of the DPRK," the statement said, referring to the country by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The North Korean government regularly threatens the United States and South Korea, but the rhetoric has become increasingly concerning after the North declared the Korean War Armistice Agreement nullified from March 11. The agreement, signed in July 1953, put into force a cease-fire in an effort to end the Korean War. In Tuesday's statement, condemning the massive ongoing military exercises, the army said there is a limit to its patience. "It is the clear conclusion drawn by us that we can never tolerate the serious situation in which the sovereignty and dignity of the supreme leadership of the country are ruthlessly trampled down and the U.S. nuclear threat and blackmail are turning into a real war," it said. As a result, the KPA's Supreme Command ordered its artillery and rocket forces which are assigned to U.S. bases to be put at their highest level of alert. It said the units are targeting U.S. troops on the U.S. mainland, the U.S. state of Hawaii, the unincorporated U.S. territory of Guam, and other U.S. targets in the Pacific Ocean and South Korea. "The enemies are seriously mistaken if they think they can find an opportunity for striking `basic bases` and attacking `support forces` and `commanding forces`," the army said. "They should be mindful that everything will be reduced to ashes and flames the moment the first attack is unleashed." U.S. officials strongly condemned the North's latest threat to strike American targets. "North Korea's bellicose rhetoric and the threats that they engage in follow a pattern designed to raise tensions and intimidate others," said White House spokesman Jay Carney. "The DPRK will achieve nothing by these threats or provocations, which will only further isolate North Korea and undermine international efforts to ensure peace and stability in Northeast Asia." Pentagon spokesman George Little said the United States is concerned about any events on the Korean Peninsula that could raise tensions. "It's not just artillery. North Korea has nuclear capabilities, so the full range of their arsenal is of concern to the United States and to our South Korean allies," he said, adding that the North's threats help no one. Earlier this month, North Korea's foreign ministry threatened to launch a preemptive nuclear strike against the United States in response to massive military exercises in the region this month. The U.S. later decided to place 14 additional ground-based interceptors at Fort Greely, Alaska, and Vandenberg Air Force Base, California, to counter any North Korean attack. On March 7, the United Nations (UN) Security Council voted in favor of tough new sanctions to punish the reclusive country for its latest nuclear test. The sanctions aim to significantly impede North Korea's ability to further develop nuclear and ballistic missile programs, as well as its proliferation activities. Sanctions were first imposed on North Korea by the UN Security Council following nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, including a ban on the import of nuclear and missile technology. The sanctions were further tightened in January 2013 after the country launched a long-range Unha-3 rocket which North Korea claimed to be a weather satellite, but other countries described it as a long-range missile test in disguise.

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