Beat: News

North Korea cuts last military hotline with South

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USPA News - North Korea cut its military hotline with the South on Wednesday, saying that military talks between the two nations are not needed at a time when war can break out at "any moment," just a day after North Korean forces were put at their highest alert. The decision was announced at 11:20 a.m. local time on Wednesday when a senior North Korean military official used the hotline to call the South`s military.

The unidentified official, the head of the North`s delegation to North-South Korean general-level talks, said the situation is becoming "grim" as massive South Korea-U.S. military drills continue. "Under the situation where a war may break out any moment, there is no need to keep North-South military communications which were laid between the militaries of both sides," the military official said during the call. "War and confrontation can never go together with dialogue and reconciliation under any circumstances." The official said there would be no direct talks between the two countries from now on. "I inform the South side that the North-South military communications will be cut off and the members of the North side at the military communications liaison office in the zone under the control of the North and the South in the west coastal area will stop their activities from this moment," he said. The military official said the communication channels would remain cut until South Korea halts its "anachronistic hostile acts" against the North. "Not words but only arms will work on the U.S. and the South Korean puppet forces," he said, adding that the North`s will would be displayed through "practical physical counteraction." South Korea`s Unification Ministry described the move as "unhelpful" and said it could affect the safe operation of the inter-Korean joint industrial complex in the North`s Kaesong. When North Korea cut the military hotline in 2008, a number of South Korean workers at the facility were left stranded in the North. There are no normal direct telephone links between the two countries, but three telephone hotlines remain operational to exchange information about air traffic. In Washington, U.S. State Department spokesman Patrick Ventrell said the North`s decision to cut the military hotline is "not constructive to ensuring peace and stability on the peninsula." He added that the U.S. government has its own way of communicating with North Korea, and said the channel of communication is still in place. Wednesday`s announcement came just a day after North Korea`s army said 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, warning that the Korean Peninsula is moving closer to war. "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 Korean People`s Army (KPA) said in Tuesday`s statement, referring to the country by its official name, the Democratic People`s Republic of Korea. The KPA`s Supreme Command said it 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. bases 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 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. 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. And 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 have described it as a long-range missile test in disguise.

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