

North Korea accuses US of raising war mood through military drills

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North Korea today alleged that by continuing with military drills on the Korean peninsula, the United States was raising the war mood in the region.

North Korea President Kim Jong-un

North Korea's reaction came after the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported that B-1B Lancer strategic bombers made a series of flights over Korea between March 15 and 30.

The B-1Bs from Guam conducted bombing drills in South Korea's airspace on five sorties in preparation for a surprise attack on the North's major targets, the communist nation's state news agency added.

The US Forces Korea (USFK) made public a joint exercise involving one B-1B bomber and South Korea's fighter jets held on March 22, reported Yonhap news agency.

"The deployment of such bombers on the Korean Peninsula is made in accordance with a related training programme. We do not reveal every information," a USFK official said.

But a South Korean defence source said it's true that the US flew B-1Bs over Korea five times in the past two weeks.

The source cited the allies' principle of only disclosing specific moves of strategic weapons when necessary.

The KCNA also took issue with a reported exercise of American special forces here, calling it a "madcap rehearsal for carrying out the beheading operation," which drives the situation into "the most extreme phase".

It was referring to the possibility of the US trying to take out the North's leadership.

South Korea and the US have been carrying out their annual combined defence drills since early March. The North has long responded angrily to the allies' move.

This year, in particular, Pyongyang has shown a sensitive reaction to rumours of a possible pre-emptive attack or an operation to remove leader Kim Jong-un.

The Donald Trump administration has stated that it will consider "all options" to deal with North Korea.

- (With IANS inputs)