

## **North Korea says 'a nuclear war may break out any moment'**

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**Seoul:** North Korea's deputy U.N. ambassador warned Monday that the situation on the Korean peninsula "has reached the touch-and-go point and a nuclear war may break out any moment."

### **File - A US F-35 stealth fighter at Seoul International Aerospace and Defense Exhibition**

Kim In Ryong told the U.N. General Assembly's disarmament committee that North Korea is the only country in the world that has been subjected to "such an extreme and direct nuclear threat" from the United States since the 1970s and said the country has the right to possess nuclear weapons in self-defense.

He pointed to large-scale military exercises every year using "nuclear assets" and said what is more dangerous is what he called a U.S. plan to stage a "secret operation aimed at the removal of our supreme leadership."

This year, Kim said, North Korea completed its "state nuclear force and thus became the full-fledged nuclear power which possesses the delivery means of various ranges, including the atomic bomb, H-bomb and intercontinental ballistic rockets."

"The entire U.S. mainland is within our firing range and if the U.S. dares to invade our sacred territory even an inch it will not escape our severe punishment in any part of the globe," he warned.

Kim's speech follows escalating threats between North Korea and the United States, and increasingly tough U.N. sanctions.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Monday that his country is curtailing economic, scientific and other ties with North Korea in line with U.N. sanctions, and the European Union announced new sanctions on Pyongyang for developing nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Sunday that diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the North Korean crisis "will continue until the first bomb drops." His commitment to diplomacy came despite President Donald Trump's tweets several weeks ago that his chief envoy was "wasting his time" trying to negotiate with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, whom he derisively referred to as "Little Rocket Man."

North Korea's deputy U.N. ambassador called his country's nuclear and missile arsenal "a precious strategic asset that cannot be reversed or bartered for anything."

"Unless the hostile policy and the nuclear threat of the U.S. is thoroughly eradicated, we will never put our nuclear weapons and ballistic rockets on the negotiating table under any circumstances," Kim said.

He told the disarmament committee that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea "North Korea's official name" had hoped for a nuclear-free world.

Instead, Kim said, all nuclear states are accelerating the modernization of their weapons and "reviving a nuclear arms race reminiscent of (the) Cold War era." He noted that the nuclear weapon states, including the United States, boycotted negotiations for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that was approved in July by 122 countries at the United Nations.

“The DPRK consistently supports the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the efforts for denuclearization of the entire world,” he said. But as long as the United States rejects the treaty and “constantly threatens and blackmails the DPRK with nuclear weapons ... the DPRK is not in position to accede to the treaty.”

- AP