

## **North Korea says war is inevitable as allies continue war games**

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**Seoul:** North Korea says a nuclear war on the Korean Peninsula has become a matter of when, not if, as it continued to lash out at a massive joint military exercise between the United States and South Korea involving hundreds of advanced warplanes.

### **File photo of North Korea's dictator Kim Jong Un.**

In comments attributed to an unnamed Foreign Ministry spokesman, North Korea also claimed high-ranked US officials, including CIA Director Mike Pompeo, have further confirmed American intent for war with a series of "bellicose remarks."

Pompeo said on Saturday that US intelligence agencies believe North Korean leader Kim Jong Un doesn't have a good idea about how tenuous his situation is domestically and internationally.

The North's spokesman said Pompeo provoked the country by "impudently criticizing our supreme leadership which is the heart of our people."

"The large-scale nuclear war exercises conducted by the US in succession are creating touch-and-go situation on the Korean peninsula and series of violent war remarks coming from the US high-level politicians amid such circumstances have made an outbreak of war on the Korean peninsula an established fact. The remaining question now is: when will the war break out," the spokesman said.

"We do not wish for a war but shall not hide from it, and should the US miscalculate our patience and light the fuse for a nuclear war, we will surely make the US dearly pay the consequences with our mighty nuclear force which we have consistently strengthened."

The comments were carried by the official Korean Central News Agency late on Wednesday, hours after the United States flew a B-1B supersonic bomber over South Korea as part of a massive combined aerial exercise involving hundreds of warplanes.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the Guam-based bomber simulated land strikes at a military field near South Korea's eastern coast during a drill with US and South Korean fighter jets.

"Through the drill, the South Korean and US air forces displayed the allies' strong intent and ability to punish North Korea when threatened by nuclear weapons and missiles," the South Korean military said in a statement.

B-1Bs flyovers have become an increasingly familiar show of force to North Korea, which after three intercontinental ballistic missile tests has clearly moved closer toward building a nuclear arsenal that could viably target the US mainland.

The five-day drills that began on Monday involve more than 200 aircraft, including six US F-22 and 18 F-35 stealth fighters.

North Korea hates such displays of American military might at close range and typically uses strong language to condemn them as invasion rehearsals. It has been particularly sensitive about B-1B bombers, describing them as

"nuclear strategic" although the planes were switched to conventional weaponry in the mid-1990s.

- AP