

# Following NATO Summit, North Korea Denounces US-South Korea-Japan Joint Military Cooperation

North Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson said the country will beef up its self-defense capabilities against the U.S. and its allies.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry spokesperson denounced the "hostility" it said the United States, South Korea, and Japan showed during the NATO summit, North Korea's state-controlled Korean Central News reported on Sunday.

"During the recent NATO summit, the chief executives of the U.S., Japan and South Korea put their heads together for confrontation with the DPRK and discussed the dangerous joint military countermeasures against it including the launch of tripartite joint military exercises, taking issue with its legitimate exercise of the right to self-defense for no ground," the KCNA quoted the spokesperson as saying. (DPRK is an acronym of the North's official name: Democratic People's Republic of Korea.)

As the leaders of the three countries agreed to strengthen trilateral engagement over the North's nuclear and missile threats, Pyongyang again accused of them revealing their "hostile intent" toward it.

"The U.S. and its vassal forces inserted a hostile expression of finding fault with the DPRK's measure for bolstering its military capability for self-defense in a new 'strategic concept' adopted at the NATO summit," the spokesperson said.

The spokesperson also said that the NATO summit proved the U.S. intention of containing China and Russia at the same time by "realizing the militarization of Europe" and "forming a military alliance like NATO in the Asia-Pacific region." The trilateral military alliance of the U.S., South Korea, and Japan is "an important means" to carry out the plan, the spokesperson said.

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Emphasizing the necessity of building up North Korea's defenses to cope with "the rapid aggravation of the security environment of the Korean Peninsula and

the rest of the world,” the spokesperson also stated that the U.S. is trying to attain “military supremacy” not only the Asia-Pacific region but also the rest of world by “spreading the rumor about ‘threat’ from North Korea.”

“The DPRK will reliably defend the sovereignty and interests of the country and its territory from all sorts of threats caused by the hostile acts of the U.S. and its vassal forces and fulfill its responsible duty to ensure peace and security in the Korean Peninsula and the region,” the spokesperson said.

North Korea appointed Choe Son Hui, a veteran diplomat, as the country’s first female foreign minister during a plenary meeting of the ruling party’s Central Committee last month. Choe has decades of experience in nuclear negotiations between North Korea and the world, starting with the Six-Party Talks in the early 2000s and most recently during the North Korea-U.S. leaders’ summits in Singapore and Hanoi. As tensions on the Korean Peninsula escalate, the promotion of Choe indicates that Pyongyang would not voluntarily come back to the negotiating table to escape from the crippling economic sanctions.

In this context, the remarks from the spokesperson of Choe’s Foreign Ministry show that Pyongyang will respond strongly to trilateral cooperation of the U.S., South Korea and Japan over its nuclear and missile programs development.

Since U.S. President Joe Biden took office in January 2021, Washington has consistently reiterated that it has “no hostile intent” toward North Korea in an effort to restore the deadlocked nuclear talks. However, in the absence of any preemptive concessions from Washington, Pyongyang has conducted an unprecedented number of missile tests this year, showing considerably little hope for the nuclear talks.

During the joint press conference after his first summit meeting with South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol in May, Biden did not completely rule out the possibility of meeting Kim Jong Un, the North’s supreme leader, but implied preconditions by saying that it depends on Kim whether to hold a North Korea-U.S. summit meeting. Under the aim of the complete, verifiable, and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Washington has urged Pyongyang to take substantive steps to denuclearize the country first while offering to provide unspecified economic packages in exchange for the North’s denuclearization process.

However, since then-U.S. President Donald Trump walked out of the 2019 summit meeting with Kim in Hanoi after the two leaders failed to narrow their different views on the scale of lifting economic sanctions in exchange for dismantling the North's nuclear arsenals, North Korea has made clear that it would never return to the table unless the U.S. makes concessions. To increase its leverage on the negotiating table, North Korea has tested various ballistic missiles, while its seventh nuclear test is expected to be conducted in the coming months.

Janet Yellen, the U.S. treasury secretary, will make a two-day trip to Seoul from July 19 to 20 and will discuss economic issues, including possible new or further sanctions on North Korea for its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Considering Seoul and Washington's planned moves for the sanctions and military cooperation, the arms race of the Korean Peninsula will likely be intensified while the door for diplomacy remains closed.

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