

North Korea warns Australia that supporting Trump is a 'suicidal act'

Pyongyang's official news agency says Malcolm Turnbull 'invites disaster' by pledging to support the US in any conflict with Kim Jong-un's regime.

North Korea has warned Australia it has committed a "suicidal act" by committing its troops to help the US in any conflict over Pyongyang's nuclear program and by joining military exercises with US and South Korean forces.

The official KCNA news agency noted that the Australian prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, had recently vowed his country's military would fight alongside the US if the latter was attacked by North Korea.

The prime minister told 3AW last week that Australia and the US were joined at the hip on defence matters, and "if there is an attack on the US, the Anzus treaty would be invoked" and Australia would come to the aid of the United States.

In response to the warning from North Korea, Turnbull hit back on Monday night, issuing a short statement saying: "North Korea has shown it has no regard for the welfare of its own population, no regard for the security and good relations with its neighbours and no regard for international law."

The prime minister said Australia called on all countries to "redouble their efforts, including through implementation of agreed UN security council resolutions, to bring North Korea to its senses and end its reckless and dangerous threats to the peace of our region and the world".

Citing an unnamed official from the North Korean foreign ministry, KCNA said Turnbull's show of support for Washington, coupled with Australia's participation in the military drills, had left the country open to unspecified "counter-measures of justice" by North Korea.

"This is a suicidal act of inviting disaster, as it is an illustration of political immaturity, unaware of the seriousness of the current situation," KCNA said.

While the agency has relayed a series of threats against the US – specifically the Pacific territory of Guam – in recent weeks, this is the first time that Pyongyang has singled out the Australian government for criticism.

The ministry official accused Turnbull of abandoning his opposition to Donald Trump's confrontational stance towards Pyongyang over its nuclear and ballistic missile program, and reminded him that Australia had paid a high price for its involvement in previous US wars, according to KCNA.

"Australia followed the US to the Korean war, the Vietnamese war and the 'war on terrorism', but heavy loss of lives and assets were all that it got in return," it said.

"The Australian government had better devote time and energy to maintaining peace of its own country, instead of forgetting the lessons learned in the past and joining the US in the moves for nuclear war."

The report was issued on the eve of Ulchi Freedom Guardian – 11 days of military exercises involving tens of thousands of South Korean and US troops and a smaller number from other countries, including Britain and Australia.

In committing Australian forces to the drills, the defence minister, Marise Payne, and the "military brass hat of Australia" were supporting "aggressive nuclear exercises of the US", KCNA said.

While the exercises will mainly revolve around computer-simulated war games, North Korea has described them as highly provocative, claiming that they are a rehearsal for invasion.

Around 17,500 US troops will participate in the drills – several thousand fewer than last year. South Korean media reports have said the US was considering scrapping a plan to bring in two aircraft carriers to the peninsula.

But the US defence secretary, James Mattis, said on Sunday that the smaller troop numbers were "by design to achieve the exercise objectives" and denied Washington had cut troop numbers in an attempt to ease tensions with Pyongyang.

"This right now is an exercise to make certain that we're ready to defend South Korea and our allies over there," Mattis told reporters aboard an aircraft flying to

Amman, Jordan.

North Korea has not publicly commented on the drills since they began on Monday, but at the weekend it accused Washington of “pouring gasoline on fire”.

In a commentary carried by the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper, the North warned of an “uncontrollable phase of a nuclear war” on the peninsula, which would entangle the US mainland.

“If the United States is lost in a fantasy that war on the peninsula is at somebody else’s doorstep far away from them across the Pacific, it is far more mistaken than ever.”

Source: <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/aug/21/north-korea-warns-australia-that-supporting-trump-is-a-suicide-act>

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