

US and North Korea trade warnings on nuclear strikes



US Ambassador Robert Wood (R) waits next to US Army Captain Murzban Morris of the Department of Defense Joint Staff before their address on North Korea to the Conference on Disarmament at the United Nations Office in Geneva, Switzerland on August 30, 2017. Reuters file photo

Reuters, Geneva

The United States said today that North Korea may be only months away from being able to strike the US mainland with a nuclear-tipped ballistic missile, while Pyongyang said Washington was considering a pre-emptive strike against it.

The clash came at the United Nations-sponsored Conference on Disarmament days after the Trump administration said it will expand its nuclear capability.

US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood, addressing the Geneva forum, also warned that arsenals in China and Russia were expanding, drawing rebukes from their respective delegations.

“Russia, China and North Korea are growing their stockpiles, increasing the prominence of nuclear weapons in their security strategies, and – in some cases – pursuing the development of new nuclear capabilities to threaten other peaceful nations,” Wood said.

North Korea “may now be only months away from the capability to strike the US with nuclear-armed ballistic missiles”, he said, giving no further detail on the source of the statement.

North Korea is under tightening UN Security Council resolutions for its banned nuclear and ballistic missile programs, but relations with South Korea have softened in the lead-up to the Pyeongchang Olympic Games opening on February 9.

North Korea accused the United States of seeking to aggravate the situation on

the divided Korean peninsula by “deploying large nuclear assets” nearby and lay the ground for a possible pre-emptive strike against it.

“In view of the nature and scale of US military reinforcements, they are designed to make a pre-emptive strike against the DPRK,” North Korean diplomat Ju Yong Chol told the talks, referring to his country’s official name the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

“US officials including the defense secretary and the CIA director repeatedly talked about DPRK nuclear and missile threat to justify their argument for a military option and a new concept of a so-called ‘bloody nose’, a limited pre-emptive strike on the DPRK is under consideration within the US administration,” Ju said.

Wood took the floor to retort: “If you claim to want peace, end your nuclear and ballistic missile tests and stop your provocative behavior and threats”.

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