

‘North Korea is NOT vulnerable’ Analyst warns there are NO GAPS in Kim Jong-un’s military

Harvey Gavin

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Two defence experts said a military parade carried out by Kim Jong-un’s regime revealed a “key vulnerability” in the dictator’s forces.

David Schmerler and Eric Gomez claimed the regime's show of force on the eve of the Winter Olympics featured a notable lack of transporters for the Hwasong-15 intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and concluded the North was probably struggling to build enough.

But a North Korea expert has now disputed this, insisting the hermit kingdom is more than capable of producing vehicles able to move and fire the weapon.

Footage from the parade on Friday, February 9 showed four of the latest ICBMs rumbling through the streets of Pyongyang while Kim watched on from a balcony.

The huge rockets were mounted on the back of 18-wheel transport erector launchers (TEL), huge truck-like vehicles which can be moved, parked then quickly transformed into a launch pad.

In a report for North Korea monitoring group 38 North, expert Joseph S Bermudez Jr said: “First and foremost, North Korea uses these parades to display only the weapons systems that it wants the public to see.

“It does not display all its weapons systems every time, or for that matter, all its latest weapons systems.”

Mr Bermudez Jr admitted the North may well be suffering from a shortage of the high-tech TELs.

He added the hermit kingdom does have plenty of other options for deploying its deadly weapons, such as mobile erector launchers (MEL) and transporter erectors (TE) that need to be towed by other vehicles.

Mr Bermudez Jr said: “North Korea possesses all the capabilities to produce towed MELs and TEs that it requires.

“Additionally, it possesses sufficient numbers of cabs capable of towing these launchers should it wish to dedicate them to its ballistic missile force.

"It would therefore appear to be imprudent to simply infer that there is a 'key vulnerability' in North Korea’s ability to launch ICBMs based solely upon what was seen during the recent Army Day military parade."

North Korea has previously relied on converted Chinese logging trucks to transport its long-range missiles.

But the reclusive state now claims it has the capacity to build the latest TELs from scratch.

Writing in a blog post following Friday's parade, Eric Gomez, a policy analyst for defence and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, questioned why more of the launchers were not shown off.

He said: "The number of TELs in [Thursday's] parade is important because it represents a key vulnerability in North Korea's ICBM force.

"All of the North Korean vehicles capable of carrying ICBMs are based on Chinese-made heavy logging trucks that were modified by the North Koreans to carry missiles, but no more than six of these trucks have been seen at one time."