



DPRK vows to scrap Korean War armistice agreement

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PYONGYANG/WASHINGTON, March 7 (Xinhua) -- The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has vowed to nullify an armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War from March 11, and warned of more and stronger countermeasures if the United States and South Korea continued joint military drills.

The announcement, made by DPRK's top Army Supreme Command on a rare appearance on the state TV, came when the UN Security Council is ironing out penalties against Pyongyang over its third nuclear test on Feb. 12. Diplomats said that a Council resolution condemning the test and toughening sanctions on DPRK will be put to a vote as early as this week.

March 11 marks the start of the annual joint South Korea-U.S. military exercises, which will involve 10,000 South Korean and 3,500 U.S. troops. The drill, dubbed Key Resolve, was denounced by DPRK's official KCNA news agency as a prelude to an invasion.

Experts said the DPRK's latest move aims to defy the possible new UN sanctions and seeks to replace the armistice agreement with a peace treaty that guarantees Pyongyang's security, as requested by DPRK at the six-party talks.

Signed in 1953, the armistice agreement is designed to "insure a complete cessation of hostilities and of all acts of armed force in Korea until a final peaceful settlement is achieved."

However, the DPRK has not signed a peace treaty with either South Korea or the United States.

The DPRK has canceled the ceasefire accord twice over South Korea's accession to the U.S.-led Proliferation Security initiative in 2009 and the annual joint South Korea-U.S. military drill in 2010.

Ted Carpenter, senior researcher of Cato Institute, a U.S. think tank, said the chance for the escalation of military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula is slim, adding that "Washington and its allies need to accept that it may be too dangerous to try to isolate a nuclear power instead of trying to establish a constructive relationship" with Pyongyang.

Hahm Chaibone, head of South Korea's Asan Institute for Policy Studies, said the DPRK deemed it necessary to get tough in the face of strong external pressure. However, the concerned parties should not give up dissuading Pyongyang from taking provocative measures.

Hahm said that Washington and Seoul were very unlikely to launch unilateral military actions against Pyongyang but some defensive measures may be possible.

China called for calmness and restraint as the situation of the Korean Peninsula is complicated and subtle. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said on Wednesday that China urged related parties to start from the peace and stability over the Peninsula and refrain from actions that may escalate the tensions.

Regarding the United Nations Security Council's discussion on DPRK's latest nuclear test, Hua said China supports the appropriate UN response which showed its opposition to the DPRK's nuclear test