
JAPAN TO HALT MISSILE ATTACK DRILLS AFTER TRUMP-KIM SUMMIT: KYODO

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21.06.2018

Straits Times (20 June 2018)

Japan has decided to halt drills to prepare for a North Korean missile attack after a historic summit between the leaders of the United States and North Korea eased tension, Kyodo news agency reported on Thursday (June 21).

A Cabinet Office official told Reuters it would make an announcement on Friday (June 22) concerning the drills.

US President Donald Trump met North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in Singapore last week and Kim committed to "work toward complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula", while Trump said he would end what he called "provocative" US-South Korean military exercises.

Japan welcomed the summit as a first step towards the denuclearisation of North Korea, but also said the US-South Korean exercises were a vital deterrent to North Korean threats.

North Korea last year launched two missiles that flew over Japan. It also conducted its sixth nuclear test.

Japanese Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera said on Thursday that Japan and the US needed to keep up their guard against North Korea until the country took steps towards denuclearisation.

North Korea has yet to show any concrete steps towards denuclearisation, Onodera said in opening remarks ahead of his meeting with US Indo-Pacific military commander Philip Davidson in Tokyo.

US Navy Admiral Davidson was promoted to commander of the US Indo-Pacific Command

(INDOPACOM) last month.

Japan's capital of Tokyo held its first evacuation drill in January and smaller Japanese towns and villages have conducted similar exercises as North Korea pushed ahead with its missile and nuclear weapons programmes.

Kyodo said there were plans for evacuation drills this year in nine prefectures.

An official in Yaita, in northern Japan, told Reuters that Tochigi Prefecture, where it is located, had notified the city that the central government had decided to halt the planned drill "taking into account the international situation".

Kyodo said several other prefectures had also been notified of the imminent decision to halt the drills.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is eyeing his own summit with Kim to tackle the matter of Japanese citizens kidnapped by North Korean agents decades ago.

In 2002, North Korea admitted that its agents had kidnapped 13 Japanese in the 1970s and 1980s. Japan says 17 of its citizens were abducted, five of whom were repatriated.

North Korea has said eight are dead, while another four never entered the country. Abe has made the issue a pillar of his political career and vowed not to rest until all the abductees come home.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/japan-to-halt-missile-attack-drills-after-trump-kim-summit-kyodo>

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