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NORTH KOREA THREATENS 'U.S. MAINLAND' IN RESPONSE TO LARGEST EVER JOINT DRILL ON BORDER

February 25, 2016 Breitbart.com reported: “‘The doom of the U.S. has been sealed.’ So reads a statement on North Korea’s official state media outlet, warning Pyongyang will attack the ‘U.S. Mainland’ if American and South Korean forces complete a military drill simulating the collapse of the Kim Jong-un regime in March.

‘All the service personnel and people of the DPRK are ready to immediately and mercilessly punish without slightest leniency, tolerance and patience anyone provoking the dignified supreme headquarters even a bit,’ a statement at the Korean Central News Agency’s (KCNA) website read Tuesday, in response to the news that the United States and South Korea are preparing for a military drill that will have 300,000 soldiers simulating an invasion of North Korea. Pyongyang did not limit their rhetoric to vague proposals for attacking both countries, instead highlighting specifically what their first and second targets of attack will be should the military drill occur.

‘Our primary target is the Chongwadae [the residence and office of South Korea’s president], the centre for hatching plots for confrontation with the fellow countrymen in the north, and reactionary ruling machines,’ the statement read. ‘The U.S. imperialist aggressor forces’ bases for invading the DPRK in the Asia-Pacific region and the U.S. mainland are its second striking target,’ it adds.

‘The U.S. is fated to be punished and perish in the flames due to the DPRK’s deadly strikes,’ the statement concludes.

The North Korean government has been threatening to “destroy” the United States with greater frequency this year, following the claim in mid-January that the North Korean military had detonated a hydrogen bomb (most experts believe this to be a lie, and the weapon in question to have been a much weaker hybrid atomic weapon than a hydrogen bomb). After the announcement of that detonation, KCNA published a report claiming that North Korea’s nuclear scientists were eager to “wipe out the entire United States with H-bombs,” celebrating the bomb test as a victory against “imperialism.”

15,000 American troops are expected to participate in the military exercises scheduled for early March, named Key Resolve and Foal Eagle”...”

CHINA TO SECURE 'DE FACTO' CONTROL OF S. CHINA SEA: US ADMIRAL

February 25, 2016 SpaceDaily, com reported: “China is on its way to securing "de facto" control of the South China Sea, a top US admiral warned Thursday, amid growing unease over Beijing's continued military build up in the contested waterway. By building air bases and hardened bunkers on tiny islands, some of which are reclaimed from the sea, and by installing sophisticated radar and missile defense systems, China has shown it is determined to achieve military primacy in the region, Admiral Harry Harris said. Beijing's claims to almost all of the South China Sea are widely disputed and the body of water has long been viewed as a potential flashpoint.

"If China continues to arm all of the bases they have reclaimed in the South China Sea, they will change the operational landscape in the region," Harris told Pentagon reporters.

"Short of war with the United States, China will exercise de facto control of the South China Sea."

Harris, who heads up the US Pacific Command, visited the Pentagon after several hearings in Washington at which he warned lawmakers about the pace of China's maritime militarization.

"Harris is raising alarm about what could happen if there's not sufficient push back, that's what he's trying to provoke here, a more robust response from the region and outside the region," said Bonnie Glaser, a senior Asia advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. "The US cannot do this alone."

China is using dredgers to turn reefs and low-lying features into larger land masses for runways and other military uses to bolster its claims of sovereignty in the region. Satellite imagery released this week shows Beijing is installing radar gear, and China has also deployed surface-to-air missiles and lengthened a runway to accommodate fighter jets on one islet, Woody Island, in the Paracels. Beijing appears to be preparing what is known as an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the entire South China Sea, through which it can militarily query any vessel or aircraft.

"I am concerned about the possibility that China might declare an ADIZ," Harris said. "I'm concerned about it from the sense that I would find that to be destabilizing and provocative."

RADICAL CANADIAN IMAM: 'ROME WILL BE CONQUERED'

February 24, 2016 Breitbart.com reported: “A radical Canadian imam called for Muslims to ‘look forward’ as ‘Rome will be conquered,’ in a Friday sermon posted on the Internet on Feb. 16 and translated by the Middle East Monitoring Research Institute (MEMRI).

‘The prophecies of the Prophet Muhammad came true. But some prophecies have not come true yet. Look forward to it, because the Prophet Muhammad said that Rome would be conquered! It will be conquered,’ preached Imam Shaban Sherif Mady. Mady, based in Edmonton, also spoke of restoring the ‘rightly-guided’ Islamic Caliphate. His reference to conquering Rome mirrors a similar call by Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi

“This is my advice to you. If you hold to it you will conquer Rome and own the world, if Allah wills,” Baghdadi preached in an attempt to garner more recruits to ISIS.

Mady’s Facebook page reveals the extent of his radicalism, boasting a cover photo featuring Muslim Brotherhood leadership”



SYRIAN CHRISTIAN LEADERS: ASSAD IS OUR PROTECTOR

February 24, 2016 ChristianToday.com reported: “New pictures and interviews from inside Damascus show widespread support for Syrian President Bashar Al Assad. An exclusive for the Daily Mail shows pictures of people shopping, playing sport and drinking tea – with no sign of the country’s vicious civil war.

But it's the interview with Luka al Khouri, the Deputy Patriarch at the Church of Antioch, which reveals just how supportive many of Syria's Christians are of the Assad regime. The Bishop speaks out in support of Assad and criticises those who aspire for democracy in Syria. 'The concept of an ethnic minority is a Western one,' he says. 'Under Assad, we in Syria are Syrian. We are all 100 per cent Sunni, 100 per cent Christian, 100 per cent Druze and 100 per cent Allawite. We stand united as Syrians.'

Despite the many allegations of torture, bombing of civilians and more from the Assad government, Christians and other minorities often remain in support, because of the relative safety offered against the threat of ISIS and other rebels.

'This a war between the Syrian people and foreign terrorists,' said Khouri.

Another anonymous Christian leader said, 'If Assad falls, they will not just massacre us, they will also kill all moderate Muslims. For 40 years Syria has had no problems between the different religions and sects. Every Syrian Christian will fight the invaders who are sponsored by the Gulf and the West [ISIS].'...

EXCLUSIVE: CHINA SENDS FIGHTER JETS TO CONTESTED ISLAND IN SOUTH CHINA SEA

February 23, 2016 FoxNews.com reported: "In a move likely to further increase already volatile tensions in the region, China has deployed fighter jets to a contested island in the South China Sea, the same island where China deployed surface-to-air missiles last week, two U.S. officials tell Fox News. The dramatic escalation came as Secretary of State John Kerry hosted his Chinese counterpart, Foreign Minister Wang Yi, at the State Department.

Wang said Tuesday he hoped that "close up" military flights and patrols by U.S. Navy ships over the contested islands would end. Kerry said he wanted China to end its militarization of the contested islands in the South China Sea.

"We want to halt the expansion and the militarization of occupied features," he said."..."

YA'ALON: ISRAEL PREPARING FOR POSSIBILITY OF WAR WITH HAMAS

February 23, 2016 YnetNews.com reported: "Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon said Monday Israel was preparing for the possibility of another war against Hamas in Gaza.

'We've been enjoying unprecedented quiet, Hamas hasn't fired one bullet,' Ya'alon said aboard the USS Carney, an American destroyer, which is currently docking in Haifa while taking part in the joint American-Israeli military exercise Juniper Cobra.

'It's growing in power, we didn't think otherwise,' he added. 'Hamas is trying to arm itself with rockets but it's having difficulties importing (rockets) as it did before and it has to manufacture them. That is why they're conducting all of the tests of firing rockets into the sea. There is also a shortage of materials to manufacture rockets with and they're trying to improvise – and of course digging defensive and offensive tunnels, we are not fooling ourselves to think that they aren't.'

'We've been preparing for the possibility that at some point a front will be opened in the south, and we'll have to deal with it,' the defense minister continued. 'We're not stagnate and we operate both with defensive and offensive measures.'..."

IRAQ SAYS IT LOCATED MISSING RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL

February 21, 2016 The Times of Israel reported: "Iraqi authorities on Sunday recovered radioactive material that had gone missing in the country's south more than three months earlier, the environment ministry's spokesman said.

'We found the radioactive material that was lost by a Turkish... company,' Amir Ali Hassoun told AFP. The material 'still had the same properties and did not lead to the injury of anyone,' Hassoun said. He said the environment ministry will keep the material — Iridium-192 — until it can be returned to its owner, which another official earlier said was Turkish firm SGS. The material was found near a wall at a gas station in Zubair, a town near the southern port city of Basra, Hassoun said..."

VIETNAM DECRIES CHINESE MISSILE DEPLOYMENT ON ISLAND

February 19, 2016 SpaceDaily.com reported: "Vietnam on Friday hit out at China's deployment of missiles on a disputed island chain, saying Beijing had "seriously violated" its sovereignty as international censure mounted over the apparent militarisation of the hotly-contested zone. Chinese state media on Thursday confirmed the presence of unspecified weapons on Woody Island, part of the Paracels chain.

The admission came after Fox News reported that surface-to-air weapons had arrived there in the past week -- although Chinese media suggested they have been in place for longer.

Vietnamese authorities handed "a note of objection" to the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi on Friday, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"These were moves that seriously violated Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa archipelagoes," spokesperson Le hai Binh said Friday, using the Vietnamese name for the Paracels.

"Threatening peace and stability in the region as well as security, safety and freedom of navigation and aviation. Vietnam requests China to immediately end those wrongful acts."

China claims all of the Paracels, though Hanoi and Taipei have overlapping claims.

Earlier on Friday Australia urged China to refrain from the "militarisation of islands", a day after the United States slammed Beijing for deploying missiles in the disputed South China Sea. Tensions in the sea -- through which a third of the world's oil passes -- have mounted in recent months after China transformed contested reefs in the Spratly islands further south into artificial islands capable of supporting military facilities."..."

