



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on April 25, 2017

North Korea Holds Large-scale Drills to Celebrate Founding of State's Military

North Korea on April 25 celebrated the 85th anniversary of the foundation of its Korean People's Army by holding a "large-scale artillery drill," according to multiple reports.

CNN quoted a statement from the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff saying: "Our military is closely monitoring the North Korean military's movements and remains firmly prepared."

Alex Neill, a senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies Asia, told CNN that North Korea's artillery drill was likely intended as a message to Seoul.

"It's important for the DPRK [Democratic People's Republic of Korea] to remind the South that very large swaths of the South Korean population are within artillery range of the North," said Neill. "So it is a sign that if the North is provoked or there is preemptive action, then a lot of Seoul and its suburbs would be within artillery range of the North."

In addition to conventional explosive charges, Neill said that chemical weapons could also be delivered by means of artillery strikes. "As [North Korea has] one of the largest stockpiles of chemical weapons, again artillery can be used for that. Sarin gas doesn't have to be dropped," Neill said.

North Korea's drills coincided with military exercises held by the U.S. and South Korean navies in the Yellow Sea, off the western coast of the Korean Peninsula, as well as simultaneous maritime exercises conducted by two destroyers from the U.S. 7th Fleet with naval ships from Japan and South Korea.

The USS *Wayne E. Meyer* and the South Korean navy's *Wang Geon* are conducting exercises in the Yellow Sea, while the USS *Fitzgerald* is teaming up with the Japanese destroyer *Chokai* in the Sea of Japan.

As the drills were being conducted in North Korea, and the U.S., South Korean, and Japanese navies conducted exercises off the Korean Peninsula, the USS *Michigan* — a guided-missile submarine — arrived in the port city of Busan, South Korea. *Business Insider* reported on April 24 that the *Michigan* is armed with more than 150 Tomahawk cruise missiles.

The Hill reported on April 25 that the Trump administration has taken the unusual step of calling the entire U.S. Senate to an April 26 meeting at the White House for a briefing on North Korea to be conducted by Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.



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