

North Korea Warns Of War With South After Artillery Fire

ERIC TALMADGE
Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Friday declared his front-line troops in a “quasi-state of war” and ordered them to prepare for battle a day after the most serious confrontation between the rivals in years.

South Korea’s military on Thursday fired dozens of artillery rounds across the border in response to what Seoul said were North Korean artillery strikes meant to back up a threat to attack loudspeakers broadcasting anti-Pyongyang propaganda.

The spike in tensions prompted the U.S. and South Korea to briefly halt an annual military exercise that began this week, U.S. defense officials said Friday. North Korea had criticized the drills, calling them a preparation for invasion, although the U.S. and South Korea insist they are defensive in nature.

The North’s declaration Friday is similar to its other warlike rhetoric in recent years, including repeated threats to reduce Seoul to a “sea of fire,” and the huge numbers of soldiers and military equipment already stationed along the border mean the area is always essentially in a “quasi-state of war.” Still, the North’s apparent willingness to test Seoul with military strikes and its recent warning of further action raise worries because South Korea has vowed to hit back with overwhelming strength should North Korea attack again.

Pyongyang says it did not fire anything at the South, a claim Seoul dismissed as nonsense.

Kim Jong Un ordered his troops to “enter a wartime state” and be fully ready for any military operations starting Friday evening, according to a report in Pyongyang’s official Korean Central News Agency. The North has also given Seoul a deadline of Saturday evening to remove border loudspeakers that, after a lull of 11 years, have started broadcasting anti-Pyongyang propaganda. Failure, Pyong-

yang says, will result in further military action. Seoul has vowed to continue the broadcasts.

The North’s media report said that “military commanders were urgently dispatched for operations to attack South Korean psychological warfare facilities if the South doesn’t stop operating them.”

South Korea’s Yonhap news agency, citing an unidentified government source, reported Friday that South Korean and U.S. surveillance assets detected the movement of vehicles carrying short-range Scud and medium-range Rodong missiles in a possible preparation for launches. South Korea’s Defense Ministry said it could not confirm the report.

North Korea said the South Korean shells fired Thursday landed near four military posts but caused no injuries. No one was reported injured in the South, either, though hundreds were evacuated from front-line towns.

The loudspeaker broadcasts began after South Korea accused the North of planting land mines that maimed two South Korean soldiers earlier this month. North Korea denies this, too.

Authoritarian North Korea, which has also restarted its own propaganda broadcasts, is extremely sensitive to any criticism of its government, run by leader Kim Jong Un, whose family has ruled since the North was founded in 1948. The loudspeaker broadcasts are taken seriously in Pyongyang because the government does not want its soldiers and residents to hear outsiders criticize human rights abuses and economic mismanagement that condemns many to abject poverty, South Korean analysts say.

North Korea on Thursday afternoon first fired a single round believed to be from an anti-aircraft gun, which landed near a South Korean border town, Seoul said. About 20 minutes later, three North Korean artillery shells fell on the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas. South



Map locating the Korean border.

Korea responded with dozens of 155-millimeter artillery rounds, according to South Korean defense officials.

South Korea’s military warned Friday that North Korea must refrain from engaging in “rash acts” or face strong punishment, according to South Korea’s Defense Ministry.

South Korea raised its military readiness to its highest level. Joint Chiefs of Staff spokesman Jeon Ha-kyu told a televised news conference that South Korea is ready to repel any additional provocation.

Escalation is a risk in any military exchange between the Koreas because after two attacks blamed on Pyongyang killed 50 South Koreans in 2010, South Korea’s military warned that any future North Korean attack could trigger strikes by South Korea that are three times as large.

Many in Seoul are accustomed to ignoring or

discounting North Korea’s repeated threats, but the latest have caused worry because of Pyongyang’s warning of strikes if the South doesn’t tear down its loudspeakers by Saturday evening. Observers say the North may need some save-facing measure to back down.

This is what happened in December 2010, when North Korea backed off an earlier warning of catastrophic retaliation after South Korea defiantly went ahead with live-fire drills near the country’s disputed western sea boundary. A month earlier, when South Korea staged similar drills, the North reacted with an artillery bombardment that killed four people on a South Korean border island. North Korea said it didn’t respond to the second drill because South Korea conducted it in a less provocative way, though the South said both drills were the same.

2 Americans Subdue Gunman On High-Speed Train

GREG KELLER
Associated Press

PARIS — A gunman opened fire on a high-speed train traveling from Amsterdam to Paris on Friday, wounding two people before two American passengers subdued him, officials said.

French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve, speaking in Arras in northern France where the suspected was detained, said one of the Americans was hospitalized with serious wounds. Their names were not immediately released.

Philippe Lorthiois, an official with the Alliance police union, said on i-Tele that the two Americans were soldiers. In Washington, the Pentagon said it “can only confirm that one U.S. military member was injured in the incident. The injury is not life-threatening.”

The White House issued a statement saying that President Barack Obama was briefed on the shooting, and said, “While the investigation into the attack is in its early stages, it is clear that their heroic actions may have prevented a far worse tragedy.”

Contrary to early reports, Lorthiois said the attacker did not fire his automatic weapon but wounded one man with a handgun and the other with a blade of some kind.

The suspect is a 26-year-old Moroccan, according to Sliman Hamzi, an official with the police union Alliance, who spoke on French television i-Tele.

Investigators from France’s special anti-terror police are leading the investigation, a spokeswoman for the Paris prosecutor’s office said.

“As always where an act that could be terrorist in nature is involved, the greatest care and the greatest precision will be used,” Cazeneuve said.

Cazeneuve said the two Americans “were particularly courageous and showed great bravery in very difficult circumstances” and that “without their sangfroid we could have been confronted with a terrible drama.”

A third person, French actor Jean-Hugues Anglade, suffered a minor injury while activating the train’s emergency alarm, Lorthiois said.

Passenger Christina Cathleen Coons of New York described the drama in car 12 of the train in an interview with Ouest France newspaper.

“I heard shots, most likely two, and a guy collapsed,” she is quoted as saying.

Coons, identified as a 28-year-old vacationing in Europe, said a window broke above one woman’s head. “A guy fell to the floor and had blood everywhere,” she is quoted as saying.

She described lying on the floor herself and taking photos with her phone.

“I thought there would be a shootout in the train,” the newspaper quotes her as saying. Then, “people came to take care of him.”

The attack took place at 1545 GMT while the Thalys train was passing through Belgium, according to a statement from the office President

Francois Hollande. Hollande said he’s spoken with Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel, and the two leaders pledged to cooperate closely on the investigation.

A young woman said on i-Tele that she was in the carriage next to the one which the gunman struck.

“I wouldn’t call it a fusillade, because even in the next wagon we didn’t hear any shots,” said Margaux, who declined to give her last name. She said passengers remained “relatively calm,” and some showed no concern until police boarded the train.

Europe’s major rail stations, such as Paris’ Gare du Nord and Brussels’ Gare du Midi, are patrolled by soldiers

armed with rifles, but passengers can board most high-speed trains without passing through metal detectors or having their bags searched.

One exception is the Eurostar between Paris and London. Passengers on those trains must pass through a metal detector and have their bags scanned as well.

Thalys is owned by the French and Belgian railways and operates high-speed trains serving Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam and Cologne, Germany.

French authorities have been on heightened alert since Islamic extremist attacks in January left 20 people dead, including the three attackers.

Islamic Leader Killed In US Airstrike

OAK BLUFFS, Mass. — The No. 2 leader of the Islamic State militant group was killed in a U.S. military airstrike in Iraq earlier this week, the White House said Friday.

Ned Price, a spokesman for the White House National Security Council, said Fadhil Ahmad al-Hayali was traveling in a vehicle near Mosul, in northern Iraq, when he was killed Tuesday.

As the senior deputy to IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, al-Hayali was the primary coordinator for moving large amounts of weapons, explosives, vehicles and people between Iraq and Syria, where IS militants control vast amounts of territory.

The United States is leading a coalition of countries that have spent the past year striking at IS militants, weaponry and machinery from the air but has made little progress in meeting President Barack Obama’s goal to “degrade and destroy” the group, which has also beheaded hostages, including some Americans.

Al-Hayali oversaw the IS in Iraq, where he planned operations over the past two years, including an offensive the group launched in Mosul in June 2014. He was a member of al-Qaida in Iraq, the predecessor group to IS.

IS Engaged In Destruction Of Old Sites

DAMASCUS, Syria — Islamic State extremists in Syria and Iraq are engaged in the “most brutal, systematic” destruction of ancient sites since World War II, the head of the U.N. cultural agency said Friday — a stark warning that came hours after militants demolished a 1,500-year-old monastery in central Syria.

The world’s only recourse is to try to prevent the sale of looted artifacts, thus cutting off a lucrative stream of income for the militants, UNESCO chief Irina Bokova told The Associated Press.

A series of recent attacks has stoked fears that IS is accelerating its campaign to demolish and loot heritage sites. On Friday, witnesses said the militants bulldozed St. Elian Monastery in central Syria. Days earlier, IS beheaded an 81-year-old antiquities scholar who had dedicated his life to overseeing the ruins of Palmyra in Syria, one of the Middle East’s most spectacular archaeological sites.

Since capturing about a third of Syria and Iraq last year, IS fighters have destroyed mosques, churches and archaeological sites, causing extensive damage to the ancient cities of Nimrud, Hatra and Dura Europos in Iraq. In May, they seized Palmyra, the Roman-era city on the edge of a modern town of the same name.

“We haven’t seen something similar since the Second World War,” Bokova said of the scope of the IS campaign against ancient sites. “I think this is the biggest attempt, the most brutal systematic destruction of world heritage.”

Biden Aides To Finalize A 2016 Run

WASHINGTON — Tucked away at his family home in Delaware, Vice President Joe Biden has been huddling with longtime aides and family members, evaluating what it would take to launch a viable presidential campaign against well-funded Democratic opponents with a huge head start.

Although Biden has yet to make a decision, his advisers say the vice president and his associates have started gaming out mechanics like fundraising, ballot deadlines and an early primary state strategy. Also under consideration are the personal consequences for Biden and his family, who are still mourning the death of the vice president’s son, Beau Biden, a few months ago.

Much of the deliberation has taken place this week at the Bidens’ house in a secluded, wooded suburb of Wilmington, said several Biden aides, who requested anonymity because they weren’t authorized to discuss the meetings publicly. In recent days, longtime Biden confidantes Mike Donilon and former Sen. Ted Kaufman have spent time there, along with Biden’s surviving son, Hunter Biden, and his sister, Valerie Owens Biden, who has played a top role in all his previous campaigns.

Washington Tragedy Highlights Youth

TWISP, Wash. — One was a college student for whom fighting fires was a summer job. Another had graduated and wanted to make firefighting his career. The third was already a professional firefighter who had gone back to school to earn his master’s degree.

Tom Zbyszewski, Richard Wheeler and Andrew Zajac — the three men who died Wednesday when flames consumed their crashed vehicle in Washington state — were typical of the wildland firefighters who start out as fresh-faced college kids making as little as \$12 an hour then find themselves hooked on the work.

Four others were injured in the canyon, one critically. But their firefighting brothers and sisters had little time to mourn as raging fires forced entire communities to flee their homes 60 miles away.

The complex of fires grew more than 100 square miles in a single day, creating a situation too chaotic to even track how many homes had burned.

“We have lost them, but I don’t know how many,” Okanogan County Sheriff Frank Rogers said. “We’ve got no idea.”

Welcome Class of 2019 First Year Medical Students University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine

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Anna Brook Bahnson	Luke Fuhrman	Keegan Mechels	Ryan Shogren
Janice Lynn	Matthew Gerlach	David James Meisinger	Benjamin Staum
Baumberger	Nicholas Goodhope	Taylor Meyer	Emily Storm*
Kristin Belsaas	Angelina Gould	Jordan Marie Needens	Jessica Sundleaf
Breann Bowar	Eric Daniel Habbe	Collin Noldner	Erin Mercer Terpstra
Alex Brech	Josh Hanscom	Amber Olson	Cody Tidwell
Brody Brisk	Alex Heard	Tania Eunice Padilla	Abbey VanDenBerg
Nicole Buchele	Brian David Hokeness	Daniel Parr	Zachary Michael Weber
Erik D Burnison	Rebecca Jarratt	Ethan Hughes Pauley	Abigail Wegehaupt
John Chandler	Samuel Jensen	Nicholas J. Pekas*	Carol Whitman
Elliott Joseph Czarnecki	Jake Johnson	Daniel Owen Pfeifle	Susan Wik
Hanna Distel	Kristopher Johnson	Sean Todd Pickthorn	Nathan Wunder
Steven Donahue	Ryan Jorgenson	Kayla Jean Pochop	Emily Wynja
Jillian Draine	Joe Kolba	Nicholas Purcell	Nathan Zvejnieks
Hanna Duffy	Katherine Kondratuk	Joshua Rogers	
J. Spencer Edman	Mark Daniel Larson	Rebecca Ann Marie	
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