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North Korea Conducts Mass Evacuation Drills, Blackout Exercises

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Global Research, October 30, 2017
Zero Hedge 29 October 2017

Region: Asia
Theme: Intelligence
In-depth Report: NORTH KOREA

A rare blackout exercise and mass evacuation drill took place in North Korea last week according to NK News, citing "multiple sources." The wartime preparations were not visible in Pyongyang, but were seen in "secondary, tertiary cities and towns" on the eastern coast of the country.

NK News and "multiple sources" stressed these drills are "extremely rare." Such "blackout and evacuation" drills are extremely rare in North Korea, multiple other sources with long experience working inside or on the country told NK News, making it difficult to gauge their purpose amid the current atmosphere.

Chun In-bum, a retired three star lieutenant general from the South Korean army, said

> "I have never heard of this type of training exercises before in North Korea, but am not surprised. They must realize how serious the situation is."

An NK News confidential "source" with-in North Korea added to the gravity of the situation: "

> I have never heard of evacuation exercises happening before."
>
> "There used to be air raid drills in 2003, but not since then," the source said, who didn't want to be identified due to the sensitivities of talking about military issues to the media. "A mass evacuation would be impossible not to notice."

The North Korean war preparation exercise drill takes place as the U.S. Navy plans to stage an extremely rare, three-carrier exercise in the next few weeks off the Korean Peninsula, which could coincide with President Trump's visit to South Korea, Japan, and China next month. The joint drills, the first in 10 years, are possible because of a rare confluence of carrier deployment schedules, according to the Pentagon.

> The USS Ronald Reagan is based in Japan. On Tuesday, the Navy announced that the USS Theodore Roosevelt Carrier Strike Group had entered 7th Fleet, followed by the USS Nimitz Carrier Strike Group on Wednesday. Nimitz is on its way back to Washington state from a deployment to the Middle East, during which time it'll operate in 7th Fleet, which covers the eastern half of the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific.

The Pentagon has said the massing of three carriers in the waters off the peninsula is not a response to the rising tension with the North over its nuclear and missile programs. But the

Navy said the ships would be available to take part in any real-world contingencies.

On Friday, Kim Jong-Un restarted the war of words when he said the U.S. is making "criminal moves for igniting a war of aggression," according to the North's state-run media.

In the meantime, many analyst believe Pyongyang has ambitions to launch at least one more intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) test in the near term, while a senior diplomat from Pyongyang warned Thursday that a possible atmospheric nuclear test over the Pacific Ocean should be taken "literally"; such a move would be viewed by parts of the U.S. government as an "attack on the homeland."

NK News author and 'multiple sources' had no further details on the drills or exercises, except for the understand of geographical locations.

> But while such evacuation drills – precise details of which were not provided by sources – may be prudent as far as helping save lives in the event of bombing campaigns in affected areas, blackout exercises have much more limited utility in the contemporary military environment.

The North Korean activities suggests the country is preparing for a kinetic US-response if a nuclear test and or an ICBM missile is launched.

Separately, as as reported previously next week, the Pentagon will conduct a nationwide blackout drill in the United States on November 04-06. Explained by Army MARS Program Manager Paul English,

> "This exercise will begin with a national massive coronal mass ejection event which will impact the national power grid as well as all forms of traditional communication, including landline telephone, cellphone, satellite, and Internet connectivity."

Curiously, a drill for a coronal mass ejection (CME) is, according to experts, very similar to an electromagnetic pulse (EMP). Just yesterday, Business Insider titled an article: *Here's what would happen if North Korea hit the US with an EMP.* Excerpts form article:

- Experts recently told Congress that a North Korean electromagnetic-pulse attack on the US could wipe out 90% of the population.
- EMP attacks are unproven, and the academic community finds this claim ridiculous.
- Even if North Korea did pull off the attack, it wouldn't hurt the US's nuclear systems that are hardened against EMPs.

Earthsky.org provides an easy understanding of what is a cornoal mass ejection (CME):

> "A CME can launch a billion tons of plasma from the sun's surface into space, at speeds of over a million miles per hour. Every so often, the sun burps. But, unlike myself, when the sun burps, it does so with the power of 20 million nuclear bombs. These hiccups are known as coronal mass ejections (CMEs)—powerful eruptions near the surface of the sun driven by kinks in the

solar magnetic field. The resulting shocks ripple through the solar system and can interrupt satellites and power grids on Earth."

The similarities between the CME and EMP are strikingly similar and could provide clarity of how the US is actively preparing for an EMP via a North Korean delivery with the "cover" of CME.

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