

US-South Korean War Games Will Destabilize Korean Peninsula

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The United States and South Korea have agreed to soon hold joint large-scale naval war games in a bid to, notably, drill interaction between the two countries' Marine Corps headquarters.

The exercises, due to be held off the South Korean port of Pkhokhan sea zone, will see the joint interaction of a total 27 warships and 30 combat and cargo helicopters – something that has already prompted military experts to call the event the biggest airborne drill ever on the South Korean soil.

In a clear show of flexing military muscles before Pyongyang, the commander of the US contingent in South Korea, Gen. Walter Sharp, said that “ we need to demonstrate that our armed forces are able to brilliantly cope with a task of fulfilling a large-scale amphibious military operation.”

Similar saber-rattling by Washington and Seoul are patently out of sync with the latest developments on the Korean Peninsula, which in the last few months has seen a significant revival of mutual trust pending six-party negotiations. Russia, China, Japan and the two Koreas have luckily managed to arrive at a political accommodation in tackling the North Korean nuclear problem, which have to date added to tarnishing ties between the North, the US and its staunch allies. At the end of the day, Pyongyang agreed to start dismantling its atomic facilities in exchange for several US-initiated moves aimed at rendering economic aid to the North and erasing it from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Needless to say that under this fragile peace-leaning situation, all the parties concerned should refrain from making any security-unfriendly steps – a wishful thinking that now sadly shows no signs of being realized. In Moscow, South-East Asia expert Konstantin Asmolov also complains that Washington and Seoul moved to hold the joint military exercise – something that he warned might well cloud the mutual warm ties.

Washington's strong drive to continue to build up its military muscles in South-East Asia is easy to explain, Asmolov argues, adding that it is in the White House's interests to fuel tensions on the Korean Peninsula. A cynical real politik suggests that it is China and Russia, not the United States, that should grapple with the North Korean nuclear issue, which, in addition, may well justify the current deployment of US troops in Japan and the South. It seems that Washington is loath to openly admit that now that the world order has substantially changed, the Bush administration continues to be involved in confrontation with Russia and China. Instead, White House hardliners have repeatedly referred to citing plausible security threats allegedly emanating from North Korea's totalitarian regime....

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