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U.S., China agree to 'peacefully denuclearize' Korean peninsula



During U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry visit to Beijing, the United States and China agreed on Saturday to work together to “peacefully denuclearize” the Korean peninsula.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and China’s top diplomat, State Councillor Yang Jiechi, said both countries supported the goal of denuclearizing the Korean peninsula, Reuters reported.

“We are able, the United States and China, to underscore our joint commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner,” Reuters quoted Kerry as saying to reporters.

“We agreed that this is critically important for the stability of the region and indeed for the world and for all of our nonproliferation efforts,” Kerry added while standing next to Yang at a state guesthouse in western Beijing.

Before travelling to Beijing for the first time as secretary of state, Kerry had made no secret of his desire to see China take a more active stance towards North Korea, which in recent weeks has threatened nuclear war against the United States and South Korea.

“We maintain that the issue should be handled and resolved peacefully through dialogue and consultation. To properly address the Korea nuclear issue serves the common interests of all parties. It is also the shared responsibility of all parties,” Yang said.

As the North’s main trading partner, financial backer and the closest thing it has to a diplomatic ally, China has a unique ability to use its leverage against the impoverished, isolated state, Kerry said in the South Korean capital, Seoul late on Friday before leaving for Beijing.

"Mr. President, this is obviously a critical time with some very challenging issues - issues on the Korean peninsula, the challenge of Iran and nuclear weapons, Syria and the Middle East, and economies around the world that are in need of a boost," AFP quoted Kerry telling Chinese President Xi Jinping on Saturday.

Meanwhile, conflicting accounts from U.S. intelligence about the status of North Korea's nuclear weapons program underscore just how difficult it is for American spy agencies to penetrate the inscrutable regime in Pyongyang, AFP reported officials and experts as saying.

The world's most powerful intelligence apparatus is often left to guesswork when it comes to tracking a regime that has cut off its population from the outside world.

"I also have to say that North Korea, of course, is now and always has been one of the, if not the, toughest intelligence targets," National Intelligence Director James Clapper told lawmakers at a hearing Thursday.

The spy chief acknowledged that North Korea's young, untested leader Kim Jong-Un remained a mystery figure whose motives and mindset were largely unknown.

"There's no telling how he's going to behave," Clapper said.

The United States gleans most of its intelligence from satellites tracking North Korean military movements, as Western spies cannot effectively operate in such a tightly-controlled dictatorship.

"It is virtually impossible to run a human spy in the north and penetrate the Korean state," Bruce Riedel, a former CIA officer and fellow at the Brookings Institution, told AFP.

The vexing challenge posed by North Korea was driven home when a Defense Intelligence Agency report came to light Thursday that seemed to paint a more dangerous picture of the country's nuclear weapons, unlike previous accounts from U.S. officials.