

U.S. Moves More Warships and Bombers Near North Korea Ahead of Olympics



Washington, January 16 (RHC)-- The United States has moved more warships and aircraft near the Korean Peninsula, expanding its military presence in the region as South Korea prepares to host North Korean athletes in Winter Olympics next month. The USS Wasp, an upgraded U.S. Marine Corps amphibious assault ship that can carry troops and a crop of fighter jets including the F-35, arrived in southern Japan over the weekend.

The U.S. Pacific Air Forces announced last week that it had deployed three B-2 "Spirit" stealth bombers along with some 200 personnel from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri to the Pacific island of Guam. Earlier, the U.S. Navy's USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier departed for the western Pacific on what the Pentagon said was a routine mission. The strike group is expected to arrive in the region before the Olympics begin on February 9th.

North Korea, which has been engaged in a long-running standoff with the U.S. over its nuclear and ballistic missile programs, blasted the move as an attempt to derail recent talks between the two Koreas. "Such moves are an unpardonable military provocation chilling the atmosphere for improved inter-Korean relations," the North Korean government said in a commentary.

Seoul and Pyongyang held their first formal talks in over two years last week after Pyongyang expressed willingness to send a delegation to the February 9-25 games in Pyeongchang. The two neighbors held a new round of talks on Monday, trying to hammer out the details of Pyongyang's plans for the upcoming sports event.

Washington has publicly welcomed the talks, claiming that the increased military presence off the Korean Peninsula only represented what the U.S. calls "routine training and scheduled upgrades."

The military maneuvers are intensifying and have even simulated capturing North Korea's nuclear weapons in one of the war games, which involved troops from Japan and South Korea as well.

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