

North Korea Rattling Its Sabers Once Again

Economic sanctions levied against North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un by the United States were a criminal act and a “declaration of war,” according to the Hermit Kingdom’s director-general of U.S. affairs in its Foreign Ministry.

“The Obama administration went so far to have the impudence to challenge the supreme dignity of the DPRK in order to get rid of its unfavorable position during the political and military showdown with the DPRK,” Han Song-ryol told reporters Thursday. “The United States has crossed the red line in our showdown,” he said. “We regard this thrice-cursed crime as a declaration of war.”

The rhetoric could be part of the North’s usual saber rattling ahead of annual joint military exercises for the U.S. and South Korean militaries. However, it also signals the hair-trigger relationship between North Korea and the U.S., which are still technically at war.

A hair trigger isn’t a good situation, given the growing tensions in the South Pacific over China’s expansionist agenda. China and Russia have also just announced they will be conducting their own joint exercises in the region, as well.

“Nobody can predict what kind of influence this kind of vicious confrontation between the DPRK and the United States will have upon the situation on the Korean Peninsula,” Han said. “By doing these kinds of vicious and hostile acts toward the DPRK, the U.S. has already declared war against the DPRK. So it is our self-defensive right and justifiable action to respond in a very hard way.

“We are all prepared for war, and we are all prepared for peace. If the United States forces those kinds of large-scale

exercises in August, then the situation caused by that will be the responsibility of the United States.”

Last year’s August exercises involved 50,000 South Korean troops and another 30,000 Americans. And while it produced similar saber rattling from North Korea, and a brief period of heightened tensions, the North showed restraint.

The exercises have a dual role of giving U.S. and South Korean forces the chance to train together, as well as putting pressure on North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program. Han said that’s not going to happen, though.

“In the view of cause and effect, it is the U.S. that provided the cause of our possession of nuclear forces,” he said. “We never hide the fact, and we are very proud of the fact, that we have very strong nuclear deterrent forces not only to cope with the United States’ nuclear blackmail but also to neutralize the nuclear blackmail of the United States.”