

Seoul USA Uses Balloon Ministry to Drop Peeps

For most of the year, Seoul USA undertakes the dangerous work of launching balloons into North Korea containing religious materials, practical necessities and news of the outside world. But this Christmas Eve, the organization will launch a very different payload into the world's most closed country: Peeps. Yes, Peeps.

Seoul USA is preparing thousands of the popular marshmallow stars, Christmas trees, and reindeer to infiltrate North Korea via the organization's giant weather balloon-style balloons. The balloons are launched from secret locations on the South Korean side of the Demilitarized Zone.

Seoul USA CEO Eric Foley says inspiration for the delivery came from the story of how one Christmas Eve during World War I, soldiers from England and Germany came out of their trenches to sing carols and to play soccer by moonlight. For one night, Foley says, war was put on hold in favor of humanity.

"We believe that for one night, it's possible to share simple joy with the people of North Korea," Foley says. "The rest of the year we'll continue to send socks, medicines, flyers, and Bibles as balloon payloads. But on Christmas Eve, Peeps will fall on North Korea like snow."

Foley notes that balloon launching into North Korea is legal in South Korea. His organization typically conducts between 50 and 60 balloon launches annually and last year sent 1.4 million flyers and 45,000 Bibles into the closed communist state. His group's work has been profiled in various media reports, and they have advised the U.S. State Department and members of Congress on North Korean religious issues.

“Everything about North Korean work is dark,” Foley says. “Every day it’s nuclear weapons and sex trafficking and concentration camps. For one night we just want to spread happiness. After all, who can be against Peeps?”

Foley notes practical reasons for choosing Peeps: “Our balloons fly at high altitude. If we sent candy canes or cookies, they might break when they hit the ground. Plus who wants to get hit on the head by a falling candy cane? Peeps are lightweight. The lighter the weight, the more we can send.”