

N. Korea threatens `merciless` response if Kim Jong-un film is released

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USPA News - The North Korean government on Wednesday warned it will deliver a "strong and merciless countermeasure" against the United States if the release of a Hollywood movie about the assassination of leader Kim Jong-un goes ahead. "The enemies have gone beyond the tolerance limit in their despicable moves to dare hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK," an unnamed spokesman for North Korea's foreign ministry said, referring to the country by its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. While the spokesman did not mention the title of the movie, the only upcoming movie with a similar plot is "The Interview," which is due to be released in October. "The Interview," directed by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg, is an action-comedy film in which James Franco plays an entertainment journalist and Rogen stars as his producer. The pair are sent to North Korea to interview leader Kim Jong-un, their show's biggest fan, but on their way to the interview the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) recruits them to assassinate the supreme leader. The film's teaser trailer, which was released earlier this month, shows a Kim Jong-un look-alike playing his character, as well as fight scenes incorporating what seem to be North Korean tanks and helicopters, and a nuclear missile launch. "Absolutely intolerable is the distribution of such film in the U.S. as it is the most undisguised terrorism and a war action to deprive the service personnel and people of the DPRK of their mental mainstay and bring down its social system," the foreign ministry spokesman said. He added: "The U.S. has gone reckless in such provocative hysteria as bribing a rogue movie maker to dare hurt the dignity of the supreme leadership of the DPRK. This act of not fearing any punishment from Heaven is touching off the towering hatred and wrath of the service personnel and people of the DPRK." Concerning the inspiration behind the film, Rogen told Yahoo! Movies earlier this month that it stems from a valid hypothesis. "People have the hypothetical discussion about how journalists have access to the world's most dangerous people, and they hypothetically would be in a good situation to assassinate them," he said. In fact, in one such incident in the days before the September 11 attacks on the United States, Afghanistan's Ahmad Shah Massoud was killed when two Tunisian citizens posing as journalists blew themselves up during an interview with the anti-Taliban commander. The attackers hid their explosives in their camera and a battery-pack belt. But the team working on "The Interview" was forced to rework their script when North Korea's former leader, Kim Jong-il, suddenly died in 2011. The original script had focused on meeting Kim Jong-il. Instead, they decided to focus on his son and successor, Kim Jong-un. "Actually [it] worked much better, because he's closer to our age, and it made it easier to forge a relationship between his character and our characters," Rogen said. But North Korea and its people view the film as a direct insult to their leader, the foreign ministry spokesman said. "They regard the supreme leadership as dearer than their own lives," he said. "It is their firm determination and stamina to mercilessly destroy anyone who dares hurt or attack the supreme leadership of the country even a bit." Though unrelated to the movie, North Korea is currently holding three Americans in custody. The latest to be detained is 56-year-old Jeffrey Edward Fowle from Ohio, who entered the country as a tourist and reportedly left a Bible at his hotel. One of the other two in custody is U.S. missionary Kenneth Bae who was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor after being found guilty of committing hostile acts aimed at toppling the North Korean government. In 2009, North Korea detained two American journalists, Euna Lee and Laura Ling, after they crossed into North Korea from neighboring China without a visa. They were convicted in June 2009 and sentenced to 12 years of hard labor, but Kim Jong-il pardoned them in August 2009. The pardon came a day after former U.S. President Bill Clinton arrived in North Korea on a publicly unannounced visit.

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.

3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168

Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA

(702) 943.0321 Local

(702) 943.0233 Facsimile

info@unitedpressassociation.org

info@gna24.com

www.gna24.com