

Beat: Miscellaneous

U.S. warns N. Korea against provocation, calls execution 'extraordinary'

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USPA News - The United States has warned North Korea against taking "provocative acts" and described the execution of leader Kim Jong-un's once-powerful uncle as "extraordinary," adding that recent events do not augur well for the leader's stated goal of building a prosperous country. Jang Song Thaek, who was considered to be the second most powerful man in the reclusive state, was executed earlier this week after being accused of organizing groups to overthrow the regime.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) called the once-respected official a traitor, describing him as "despicable human scum" and "worse than a dog." Marie Harf, a spokeswoman for the U.S. State Department, on Friday urged North Korea not to take "provocative acts" to prevent regional instability. "We're going to keep evaluating the situation and how best to move forward. But this underscores the horrific human rights record of the North Korean regime," she said. On Saturday, a senior State Department official - who spoke on the condition of not being named - described as "extraordinary" the recent events. "I would describe it as an act of brutality but not of strength. The decision to not only oust but execute in such a public way a very top official, the number two in the North Korean system, who had loyally served Kim il-Song and Kim Jong-il and had served as a mentor to Kim Jong-un in the transition after Kim Jong-il's death, is extraordinary," the official said. The senior official added: "It, to me, does not augur well for Kim Jong-un's ability to achieve his stated goal of making North Korea a strong and prosperous country. With Jong Song Thaek goes a large share of such expertise in trade and investment as North Korea possessed." In other related developments on Saturday, sources told South Korea's Yonhap news agency that North Korean businessmen in the northeastern Chinese cities of Shenyang and Dandong have been summoned back to their country in an apparent attempt to crack down on those loyal to Jang Song Thaek, who was also in charge of promoting economic ties with China. "Large numbers of North Korean businessmen in Shenyang and Dandong have gone home in a hurry this week," one source told Yonhap. Another source said the regime likely wants to "educate" the businessmen - who facilitate trade between China and North Korea - on government policies, but those who had close connections to Jang Song-thaek are likely to be "purged."

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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

