

US Politics & Policy**South Korean former general warns US against strike on north**

Be prepared for war of attrition with strong adversary, says ex-special forces chief



North Korean soldiers watch a military parade in Pyongyang. The country is believed to have a fighting force of 1m © AFP David Bond in London and Bryan Harris in Seoul JANUARY 11, 2018

One of South Korea's most distinguished former generals has warned the US there could be no quick military victory against North Korea, casting doubt on Washington's plans to deliver a ["bloody nose" attack](#) to force Kim Jong Un to scale back his nuclear ambitions.

Chun In-bum, who served for almost 40 years in the South Korean army and commanded the special forces, said the US would need to be prepared for a long, attritional war against a heavily militarised opponent.

"If we have to go into [North Korea](#), it is not going to be like going into Iraq or Afghanistan," Mr Chun told an audience at the Policy Exchange, a London think-tank. "It's not going to be like toppling [Saddam] Hussein.

"This would be more like trying to get rid of Allah. King Jong Un and his family are a cult . . . It will be a toothache like pulling out all of your teeth".

Mr Chun's comments come as relations between North and South Korea are starting to

thaw following a year of missile tests by Pyongyang and rising tensions between Mr Kim, the North's supreme leader, and Donald Trump, US president.



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This week delegates from the north and the south [met for the first time](#) in two years, with Mr Kim agreeing to send a team of athletes to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea next month.

The fresh discussions between the two Koreas risk undermining the “maximum pressure” approach of the US, although Mr Trump has not ruled out future peace talks.

“I probably have a very good relationship with Kim Jong Un,” the US president said in a Wall Street Journal interview published on Thursday. He declined to comment on whether he had spoken to Mr Kim, saying “I’m not saying I have or haven’t”, but added that he was “a very flexible person”.

In recent months US military chiefs have raised the possibility of a [pre-emptive](#) attack to signal Washington’s determination to resolve the crisis, including a strike on an air base or naval facility or bombing one of Mr Kim’s homes.

Mr Chun warned against any sudden moves. “No one likes surprises,” he said, adding that North Korea had not yet acquired the capability to hit Washington with a nuclear warhead despite testing three intercontinental ballistic missiles and conducting its sixth nuclear test

“This is where the window still exists for them to cease. If they want to broker a deal with the Americans, they need to do it now,” said Mr Chun.

Setting out North Korea’s military threat, Mr Chun said he believed that in addition to a growing nuclear capability, the country had a fighting force of 1m people, a vast stock of chemical and biological weapons and 1,000 ageing aircraft that could be used for suicide missions, although some military analysts have cast doubt on such claims in the past.

“North Korea is very militarised, far [beyond] any imagination,” he said.

Kim Chul-woo, a retired air force intelligence officer from South Korea, said it was very likely any US war with the North would “become another Vietnam”. But he questioned the long-term loyalty of the country’s top military leaders.

“They pretend to be loyal but actually they just want to survive,” he said. “They are not willing to die for the regime.”

Additional reporting by Katrina Manson in Washington

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