

# *North Korea says that it will not abandon its nuclear weapons unless U.S. nuclear threats end*

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Pyongyang, December 20 (RHC)-- North Korea has rejected U.S. calls for it to unilaterally denuclearize, and said Washington should give up its ambition to force Pyongyang to abandon its nuclear weapons by "high-handed practices and pressure," according to a statement by KCNA news agency.

Any deal for North Korea to give up its nuclear arsenal must include "completely removing the nuclear threats of the U.S.," the statement added.

The United States has said that it will not lift sanctions on North Korea until more progress has been made toward its verifiable denuclearization. Washington has also rejected any suggestion that it would reduce its military presence in the region as part of a deal with North Korea.

"It is a self-evident truth that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula is a joint work which can never come true unless the DPRK and the U.S. make joint efforts," KCNA said in the commentary, arguing that U.S. threats had forced North Korea to develop a nuclear deterrent.

"It would be proper to say that the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula means 'completely removing the nuclear threats of the U.S. to the DPRK,' before it means the elimination of its nuclear deterrence."

The statement comes when officials from South Korea and the United States began two days of talks in Seoul on Thursday precisely to address the issue of denuclearization on the Korean peninsula.

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