

Is Kim Jong Un crazy? The North Korea leader is just a cold calculator, experts say

North Korea's latest threat of nuclear war is another salvo of incendiary rhetoric from the rogue nation, but it's also part of a calculated power move by leader Kim Jong Un.

Experts say Kim's fiery talk and defiance of the international community masks a core fact: His pursuit of a nuclear program is designed to establish the legitimacy of his regime inside North Korea and to gain international stature.

CIA Director Mike Pompeo said last week that the consensus in the intelligence community is that Kim is "rational" — even though some comments from North Korea may not seem so.

More: 'Established fact': North Korea says nuclear war on Korean Peninsula inevitable

More: From good to bad: 5 possible options for what's next in North Korea-U.S. standoff

More: Kim Jong Un is cruel and dangerous but not crazy, North Korean experts say

The joint military exercises being conducted by the United States and South Korea involving hundreds of warplanes "are creating a touch-and-go situation on the Korean Peninsula," North Korea's foreign ministry said late Wednesday. "The remaining question now is: When will the war break out."

Kim has had a lengthy exchange of personal insults with President Trump, and North Korea's many missile launches prompted Trump to call Kim "rocket man."

"Kim certainly is acting rationally and predictably if his objective is to secure his hold on power," said Sheila Miyoshi Jager, a professor at Oberlin College and author of *Brothers at War: The Unending Conflict in Korea*.

North Korea's test last month established that the isolated nation had built a missile capable of reaching Washington, D.C., and other East Coast cities. Both its missile and warhead technology are advancing rapidly, as Pyongyang shows no sign of backing off its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Kim believes nuclear weapons serve as a deterrent and provide economic leverage for North Korea, Jager said. Kim fears he will go the way of Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Libya's Moammar Gadhafi — both gave up their nuclear weapons programs and were overthrown.