

Uganda faulted on continued relations with North Korea

BY RISDEL KASASIRA

editorial@ug.nationmedia.com

KAMPALA. Uganda has been listed among the top five countries in the world that have defied the United Nations sanctions against North Korea and continued military cooperation with ostracised Pyongyang.

A report by the Royal United Service Institute for Defence and Security Studies, a global security think tank released last month, lists Uganda among the countries that seem not ready to cut the ties with North Korea despite UN restrictions.

"...the number of state and non-state actors purchasing arms and related services has continually dwindled since the end of the Cold War. However, Syria, Iran, Uganda, the DR Congo, Burma and Cuba have been steadfast, continuing to contract out to Pyongyang for arms and related material and services in spite of taboos and legal restrictions against doing so," the report reads.

The report also mentions training of Uganda police in Kabalye, Masindi and the repairing of UPDF small arms in Nakasongola by North Korea as areas of cooperation that are against the UN embargo.

However, Mr James Mugume the Foreign Affairs ministry permanent secretary said yesterday North Koreans were only repairing weapons bought before sanctions.

"It's not that we are supporting proliferation of nuclear weapons. We have a lot of weapons from North Koreans which need to be serviced. We are a poor country. Should we throw away the equipment...?" Mr Mugume asked, adding "...we are engaging the UN Security Council on the issue."

North Korea has been training police in marines and marksmanship. They also train UPDF in artillery, air defence and para trooping in Nakasongola. Mr Mugume said the North Koreans are training UPDF on how to maintain the equipment.

North Korea is currently facing new proposed sanctions pushed by China and the US last week, following its test of nuclear and the long range missile last month.

Some African countries including Tanzania have cut military ties with North Korea as pressure from the UN but the report says Uganda continues to be defiant.