

Beat: Vips

## Ex-NBA star Rodman returns from N. Korea without meeting Kim

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**USPA News** - Former U.S. basketball superstar Dennis Rodman returned Monday from his third trip to North Korea without meeting his friend Kim Jong-un, saying the leader of the reclusive country was too busy but nonetheless calling the visit "awesome." Rodman, who is nicknamed "The Worm" and was known for his fierce defensive and rebounding abilities during his basketball career, landed at the international airport in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang on Thursday.

Accompanied by a documentary crew, Rodman went to help train the country's national basketball team ahead of a January 8 exhibition game to mark Kim's birthday. But after landing at an airport in the Chinese capital of Beijing on Monday morning, Rodman said Kim was too "busy" to meet during their meeting, but added that they will meet again at a later date. "I'm not worried about it. I will see him again," the ex-NBA star told reporters at the airport, as quoted by South Korea's Yonhap news agency. Prior to his trip, Rodman had said he was eager to have "a good conversation" with "friend for life" Kim, but indicated he would not bring up sensitive issues such as the recent execution of Kim's uncle and the continued imprisonment of a Korean American man. "I'm just going over there to do a basketball game and have some fun," Rodman said last week, as quoted by China's CNTV. Rodman first visited North Korea in late February after tensions had soared in the wake of the North's third nuclear test and Pyongyang's hostile response to new international sanctions and joint South Korea-U.S. military drills. He attended an exhibition basketball match with Kim and called the North Korean leader "an awesome guy" and his "friend," raising eyebrows in the United States and elsewhere. His second visit took place in September.

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### Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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