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N Korea 'prepares for more tests'



Anti-missile poster in Seoul

North Korea's nuclear test and missile launches caused alarm in the South

North Korea has moved its most advanced long-range missile to a new launch site and has banned ships from the waters off its west coast, reports say.

South Korean newspapers said the missile has arrived at the Dongchang-ni launch site on the north-west coast.

The warnings came after US Defence Secretary Robert Gates said Washington would not accept a nuclear-armed North.

A regional summit hosted by South Korea is expected to condemn the North's recent nuclear and missile tests.

The North could fire the missile as early as 16 June when South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and President Barack Obama hold a summit in Washington, suggested the Dong-a Ilbo and JoongAng Ilbo newspapers.

They quoted unidentified sources as saying the missile is believed to be a version of the Taepodong-2 rocket fired on 5 April.

The Chosun Ilbo paper added that North Korea had also designated a large area off its west coast as a "no-sail" zone until the end of July.

Last week, South Korean officials said US satellites had detected apparent preparations to transport a missile for a test launch.

The missile being readied for a new launch is believed to be an intercontinental ballistic missile or ICBM with a range of up to 6,500 km (4,000 miles), the JoongAng Ilbo reported, citing an unnamed South Korean official. That would put Alaska within striking range.

Monday's newspaper reports said North Korea's construction of the new launch site

at Dongchang-ni was near completion.

Regional fears

The BBC's correspondent in Seoul, Chris Hogg, says South Korea is attempting to strengthen ties and extend its influence with South-East Asian countries. Association of South-East Asian Nations (Asean) leaders are meeting in Seogwipo, South Korea, on Monday.

Our correspondent says the gathering offers an opportunity to Mr Lee to shore up support for the tougher stance he has taken against North Korea than his predecessor did.

ESCALATING TENSIONS

27 May - North Korea says it is abandoning the truce that ended the Korean war and reportedly test-fires another missile

26 May - The North test-fires short-range missiles as South Korea announces it will join a US-led initiative to control trafficking in weapons of mass destruction

26 May - President Barack Obama pledges military support for America's East Asian allies, as the UN condemns the nuclear test

25 May - North Korea stages its second nuclear test, triggering international condemnation

29 April - Pyongyang threatens to carry out a nuclear test unless the UN apologises for criticising its recent rocket launch

14 April - Pyongyang says it is ending talks on its nuclear activities and will restore its disabled nuclear reactor after UN criticism of its rocket launch

5 April - The North goes ahead with a controversial rocket launch, seen by major governments as a cover for a long-range missile test

Q&A: North Korea nuclear test

What is N Korea's game plan?

The possibility that Pyongyang might one day be able to threaten the rest of Asia with a nuclear weapon worries Asian leaders who will be looking for reassurance that the crisis is under control.

On Friday, Pyongyang also fired a short-range missile off its east coast, and warned of "self-defence" measures if the UN Security Council imposed sanctions over what it says was a successful nuclear test carried out earlier in the week.

The North has been subject to international criticism, from the US, China and Russia among others, since the explosion, which, if confirmed, would be the North's second atomic test.

The hardline communist state, under President Kim Jong-il, has threatened military action against the South after Seoul's decision to join a US-led Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), under which North Korean ships could be stopped and searched.

US and South Korean troops are currently on high alert after the North said it was no longer bound by the truce that ended the Korean war in 1953.

Pyongyang says Seoul's decision to join the PSI is tantamount to an act of war.

25 May 2009 12:27 UK

Outrage over N Korea nuclear test



North Korean soldiers at a mass rally to celebrate the country's first nuclear test in 2006 North Korea insists it has a right to nuclear weapons

There have been expressions of international outrage after North Korea said it had successfully carried out a underground nuclear test.

US President Barack Obama described the North Korean action as a "threat to international peace" and said international action was called for.

China and Russia also condemned the test, but called for a return to talks.

A number of external agencies confirmed an explosion, probably associated with a nuclear test, had taken place.

It appeared to be a much more powerful blast than North Korea's first nuclear test, in October 2006.

An emergency session of the UN Security Council is being convened by Russia, which currently occupies the council's rotating presidency.

BBC world affairs correspondent David Loyn says North Korea appears to have moved from a posture of negotiation to confrontation over the nuclear issue.

'Safeguarding sovereignty'

An official communique read out on North Korean state radio said another round of underground nuclear testing had been "successfully conducted... as part of measures to enhance the Republic's self-defensive nuclear deterrent in all directions".

David Loyn

David Loyn, BBC world affairs correspondent

Understanding the motivation behind the actions of this most secretive of powers is never easy, but North Korea does now appear to have moved from a posture of negotiation to confrontation.

Two years ago North Korea agreed to close its main nuclear plant at Yongbyon and reveal its nuclear assets. But it has since refused to allow in inspectors, and has now withdrawn from all negotiations.

Monday's tests come a little over a month after a test of a long-range missile that threatened Asia and could have reached the US.

Neither pressure nor the offer of a large aid package have worked.

When it meets later on Monday, the UN Security Council will issue a strong statement of condemnation. President Obama is threatening action, but there are very few options left short of war.

In quotes: Reaction to N Korea test

North Korea: engage, appease, oppose?

It said the test had been "safely conducted at a new higher level in terms of explosive power and control technology".

The test would "contribute to safeguard the sovereignty of the country and the nation and socialism", the communique said.

The North gave no details of the test location, but South Korean officials said that a seismic tremor was detected in the north-eastern region around the town of Kilju - the site of North Korea's first nuclear test.

Geological recordings of the tremor suggest it was much larger than the 2006 test. That was backed up by the Russian defence ministry, which detected a blast of up to 20 kilotons - comparable to the American bombs that flattened Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

Just hours after the test, North Korea appeared to have test-fired two short-range missiles, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported, but this was not confirmed.

In a strongly worded statement, President Obama said the North's pursuit of

nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles threatened peace and was in "blatant defiance of the United Nations Security Council".

NUCLEAR CRISIS

Oct 2006 - North Korea conducts an underground nuclear test

Feb 2007 - North Korea agrees to close its main nuclear reactor in exchange for fuel aid

June 2007 - North Korea shuts its main Yongbyon reactor

June 2008 - North Korea makes its long-awaited declaration of nuclear assets

Oct 2008 - The US removes North Korea from its list of countries which sponsor terrorism

Dec 2008 - Pyongyang slows work to dismantle its nuclear programme after a US decision to suspend energy aid

Jan 2009 - The North says it is scrapping all military and political deals with the South, accusing it of "hostile intent"

April 2009 - Pyongyang launches a rocket carrying what it says is a communications satellite

25 May 2009 - North Korea conducts a second nuclear test

Q&A: North Korea nuclear test

N Korea a problem for Obama

Timeline: North Korea

"The danger posed by North Korea's threatening activities warrants action by the international community. We have been and will continue working with our allies and partners in the six-party talks as well as other members of the UN Security Council in the days ahead," his statement said.

A spokesman for South Korean President Lee Myung-bak said the test was "a provocation that can never be tolerated", while Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura said any nuclear test by the North would be "unacceptable".

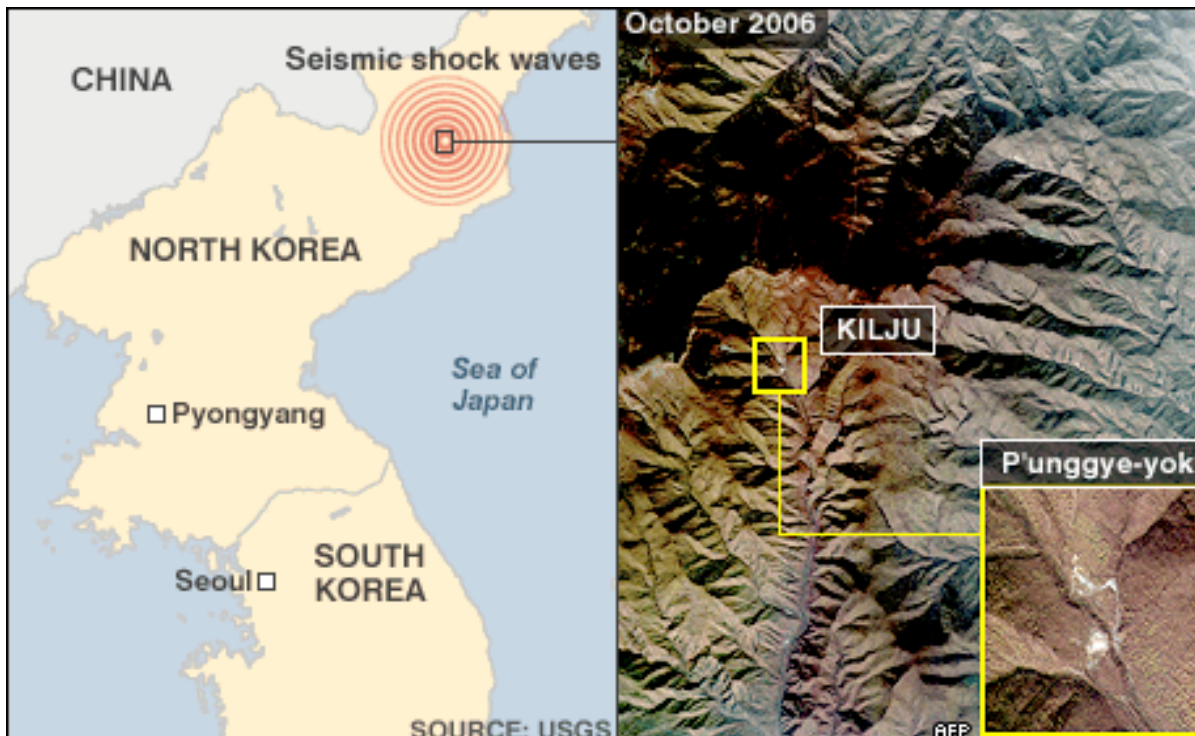
Both said they would ask for action from the UN Security Council.

The UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he was "deeply disturbed" by reports of the test - which, if confirmed, he said would violate UN Security Council resolution 1718, which demands that North Korea refrain from nuclear testing.

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown said he condemned the test "in the strongest terms" and said it would "undermine prospects for peace on the Korean peninsula".

Allies' caution

Meanwhile, the foreign ministries of North Korea's closest allies, Russia and China, echoed the words of condemnation.



NORTH KOREA'S SUSPECTED NUCLEAR TEST SITE

Map

Nuclear test on 25 May 2009 is thought to have been carried out at same site as October 2006 test

China said it was "resolutely opposed" to the test, while Russia called it "a blow to non-proliferation efforts".

But both urged North Korea back to the negotiating table - with Russia saying six-party talks were the "only solution".

Correspondents say both countries are fearful of the destabilising effect that military action or cutting off trade ties could have on their impoverished former protegee - with the spectre of millions of refugees pouring over their borders should the regime implode.

But with their shared policy of attempting to engage the North in dialogue having apparently failed, it is unclear what sway their approach will have when the UN Security Council meets later.

Last month, the UN Security Council adopted a statement calling on North Korea to comply with a 2006 resolution banning missile tests after it launched.

This was a weaker response than the full resolution sought by the US and Japan, due to resistance from Russia and China.

This time, correspondents say, they may be under pressure to back a stronger response.

Rocket condemnation

The North says it remains under military threat from its historic rival, South Korea, and South Korea's allies, primarily the US - citing such examples as the annual US-South Korean military exercises undertaken in South Korea.

It says it is entitled to retain a military deterrent.

Six-party disarmament talks involving the US, China, Japan, Russia and the two Koreas have stalled over Pyongyang's failure to agree how information it has handed over on its nuclear activities and facilities should be verified.

Pyongyang pulled out of the talks last month, in protest against international condemnation of its rocket launch.

North Korea had previously agreed to dismantle its Yongbyon nuclear facility as part of an aid-for-disarmament deal and, in response, the US removed North Korea from its terrorism blacklist.

But the North now believes it is no longer bound by its previous bilateral agreements with the US and agreements under the six-party talks, reports the BBC's John Sudworth in Seoul, South Korea.

He says the North, which already faces a stringent sanctions regime, probably thinks it has little to lose.

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[North Korea conducts nuclear test](#)
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North Korea has staged a "successful" underground nuclear test, the state-run KCNA agency reports.

The agency says it was more powerful than an earlier test in October 2006.

South Korea's president immediately convened an emergency security meeting and Japan is setting up a task force in the prime minister's office.

Just hours later, North Korea appears to have test-fired a short-range missile, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported.

Pyongyang has so far not commented on Yonhap's report.

Following the announcement from Pyongyang of its latest nuclear test early on Monday, Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kazuo Kodama said Tokyo would respond "in a responsible fashion" at the UN, without giving further details.

South Korea has set up a "crisis management" team of officers at general-level.

In Washington, a state department spokesman said the US government said it was

checking the report, "but we're not able to confirm at this time".

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The European Union has said that the development is "very worrying".

South Korea's stock market fell 4% on the news, over fears that regional tensions would rise.

The test is bound to bring widespread international condemnation, the BBC's John Sudworth in Seoul says.

'Problems resolved'

On Monday, the KCNA report said that North Korea's test was "aimed at strengthening its self-defence nuclear deterrent in every way".

"The current nuclear test was safely conducted on a new higher level in terms of its explosive power and technology of its control."

It said the results resolved "scientific and technological problems arising in further increasing the power of nuclear weapons and steadily developing nuclear technology".

The report gave no details of the location of the test.

However, South Korean officials said earlier that a seismic tremor was detected in the north-eastern part around the town of Kilju - the site of North Korea's first nuclear test.

Both South Korea's and the US geological agencies said the tremor on Monday

morning indicated a nuclear explosion.

The US Geological Survey said the 4.7-magnitude quake was detected at 0054 GMT. It happened 10km (six miles) below the surface.

Last month, Pyongyang pulled out of six-party talks on its nuclear programme, in protest against international condemnation of its test-firing of a rocket on 5 April.

The UN Security Council adopted a statement calling on North Korea to comply with a 2006 resolution banning missile tests.

Pyongyang says its rocket carried a satellite, but several nations viewed it as cover for a missile test.

The six-party talks - involving the US, China, Japan, Russia and the two Koreas - have stalled over the failure of Pyongyang to verify the shutdown of the Yongbyon nuclear plant.

North Korea agreed to dismantle the facility as part of an aid-for-disarmament deal and, in response, the US removed North Korea from its terrorism blacklist.

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N Korea 'names Kim's successor'

There has been months of speculation over who would succeed Mr Kim

South Korean media says North Korea has told its diplomatic missions abroad that Kim Jong-il's youngest son has been named as the next leader.

Two newspapers and an opposition lawmaker said diplomats had been told to support Kim Jong-un.

South Korea's Hankook Ilbo and Dong-a Ilbo newspapers reported that the regime sent the message right after the 25 May nuclear test.

There has been much speculation over who would follow the ailing Mr Kim.

He suffered a stroke last year, but appears to have recovered somewhat.

Analysts have said the North's recent military actions, including last week's nuclear test, may be aimed at helping Mr Kim solidify power so that he can name a successor.

Little known

The reports quoted unnamed members of South Korea's parliamentary intelligence committee briefed by the spy agency, although the spy agency refused to confirm the reports.

The Associated Press reported that opposition legislator Park Jie-won, a member of the parliament's intelligence committee, told local radio he had been briefed by the government on the North's move.

Mr Park said the regime is "pledging allegiance to Kim Jong-un", it reported.

The Dong-a Ilbo added that the North is teaching its people a song lauding the son - who reportedly enjoys skiing and studied English, German and French at a Swiss school.

There is no confirmed photograph of the adult Kim Jong-un and his age is uncertain. He was born either in 1983 or early 1984, reports say.

Questions have also been raised over whether his late mother, a Japanese-born professional dancer called Ko Yong-hui, was Kim Jong-il's official wife or mistress.