

4 June 2013 Last updated at 03:01 GMT

North Korea Yongbyon reactor work 'nearing completion'



Yongbyon "may be one to two months from start-up", the report says

North Korea is making "important" progress on reactivating facilities at its moth-balled Yongbyon nuclear reactor, a US think-tank says.

Start-up could be one to two months away, it said, but there was uncertainty over the availability of fuel rods to power the reactor.

North Korea announced in April that it planned to reactivate the reactor, amid high tension on the peninsula.

The reactor was closed in July 2007 as part of a disarmament-for-aid deal.

The cooling tower at the facility was later destroyed, but then the disarmament deal stalled.

North Korea's decision to restart followed its third nuclear test on 12 February, which led to expanded UN sanctions.

Plutonium source

The information came from the [38 North website](#), which is part of the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins University in the US.

Its report said that recent satellite imagery showed that North Korea had "essentially finished repairing the cooling system necessary to restart and operate the reactor".

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Yongbyon nuclear complex

- North Korea's main nuclear facility; thought to have produced the material for 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests
- Reactor shut down in July 2007 as part of a disarmament-for-aid deal; Cooling tower dismantled in 2008
- IAEA inspectors banned in April 2009 when North Korea pulled out of disarmament talks

- Experts believe that, if re-started, reactor could make one bomb's worth of plutonium per year
- A uranium enrichment facility was revealed in 2010. An American nuclear scientist said centrifuges appeared to be primarily for civilian nuclear power, but could be converted to produce highly enriched uranium bomb fuel

The cooling tower that was destroyed had not been repaired, but instead a secondary cooling system had been employed. Work was also ongoing at a spent fuel facility, it said.

Piles of construction materials were visible at the site and what could be a new drainage ditch for water from the reactor building was being dug, it said.

The reactor "may be one to two months from start-up. However, the availability of fresh fuel rods to power the reactor - a key factor that will determine when the North will restart the facility - remains unclear," it said.

Once operational, the reactor could produce "approximately six kilograms of plutonium per year that can be used for manufacturing nuclear weapons", it added.

North Korea has conducted three nuclear tests since 2006.

After UN sanctions were expanded following the most recent test, in February, North Korea issued multiple threats against US and regional interests, vowed to reactivate Yongbyon and cut both official communications and key business ties with South Korea.

Operations at the jointly-run inter-Korean Kaesong industrial zone remain suspended - the first such stoppage since the project began.

But the threats have diminished in recent weeks and last month, North Korea sent a top envoy to Beijing - its first such move since its nuclear test.

Later this week, the US and Chinese presidents meet in California for their first summit, with North Korea likely to be high on the agenda.

8 April 2013 Last updated at 07:01 GMT

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North Korea preparing nuclear test, South Korea says



Signs of activity

have been observed at the Punggye-ri test site

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Korea crisis

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North Korea may be preparing for a fourth nuclear test, South Korean officials say.

South Korean Unification Minister Ryoo Kihl-jae told lawmakers there were signs of increased activity in the North's main nuclear test site.

North Korea has stepped up its habitual fiery rhetoric against the US and South Korea in recent weeks.

Correspondents say it is unclear whether a test is being prepared or it is a ruse to boost the sense of crisis.

Mr Ryoo did not elaborate on the specific intelligence which led South Korea to suspect the North was set to carry out its fourth nuclear test.

But when asked about a news report that North Korea had stepped up activity at the underground site it has used in previous tests, he said "there are such signs".

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Timeline: Korean tensions

- **12 Dec:** North launches a rocket, claiming to have put a satellite into orbit
- **12 Feb:** North conducts underground nuclear test
- **11 Mar:** US-South Korea annual military drills begin
- **30 Mar:** North says it is entering a "state of war" with South
- **2 Apr:** North says it is restarting Yongbyon reactor
- **3 Apr:** North blocks South workers from Kaesong industrial zone
- **4 Apr:** South deploys warships to attack possible missiles from North
- **5 Apr:** North says it cannot guarantee safety of foreign embassies

- **8 Apr:** South says North could be preparing another nuclear test
- [Missile defences in the region](#)
- [How potent are North's threats?](#)
- [North Korea's missile programme](#)

Kim Min-seok, a spokesman for South Korea's defence ministry, said it was possible that the North could fire a ballistic missile and conduct a nuclear test at the same time.

But the official Yonhap news agency quoted him as playing down the threat of an imminent test, saying there were several facilities at the nuclear test site so the movement of vehicles and people there was expected.

"Currently, there is no new movement to add on to the previous briefing," he said.

Newspaper JoongAng Ilbo quoted an unnamed South Korean official as saying that South Korean intelligence had detected "increased activity of labour forces and vehicles" at the Punggye-ri nuclear test site in the country's north-east.

"We are closely monitoring the ongoing situation, which is very similar to the situation ahead of the third nuclear test," the official told the newspaper.

"We are trying to figure out whether it is a genuine preparation for a nuclear test or just a ploy to heap more pressure on us and the US."

Embassy warning

The United Nations imposed tough sanctions on North Korea last month following its third nuclear test. Pyongyang responded by stepping up angry rhetoric, including threats to use nuclear weapons and restarting its nuclear reactor.

In recent weeks, the North has shut down an emergency military hotline between Seoul and Pyongyang, stopped South Koreans from working at the Kaesong joint industrial complex and warned it would not be able to guarantee the safety of foreign embassy staff in the event of a war.

On Monday, the North's state news agency said a senior official had visited the Kaesong complex and told workers there to prepare for all possible developments.



Tension has heightened in the Korean peninsula

But some analysts have suggested that the rhetoric is in large part designed to shore up the standing of a young, inexperienced leader, Kim Jong-un, in the eyes of his own people, says the BBC's John Sudworth in Seoul.

North Korea's state media have been broadcasting a continuing diet of war and retribution, our

correspondent adds, with programmes about biochemical war, nuclear war and military preparations dominating the listing.

Meanwhile, Japan's defence ministry said the country's armed forces have been ordered to shoot down any North Korean missile headed towards its territory.

Over the weekend, the US cancelled a scheduled test of its Minuteman 3 ballistic missile, citing concerns that it could be misinterpreted by Pyongyang.

2 April 2013 Last updated at 10:06 GMT

North Korea 'to restart Yongbyon nuclear reactor'



Seoul correspondent Lucy Williamson: "Most people believe North Korea does not want to provoke an all-out war"

North Korea says it will restart all facilities at its main Yongbyon nuclear complex, including a reactor mothballed in 2007.

In a statement, it said the move would bolster North Korea's nuclear forces "in quality and quantity".

The move is the latest in a series of measures by Pyongyang in the wake of its third nuclear test in February.

It has been angered by the resultant UN sanctions and joint US-South Korea annual military drills.

In recent weeks the communist state has issued a series of threats against both South Korean and US targets, to which the US has responded with high-profile movements of advanced aircraft and warships around the Korean peninsula.

A South Korean foreign ministry spokesman said that if true, the North Korean move would be "highly regrettable".

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei called for restraint from all sides to resolve the "complex and sensitive" situation.

'Adjust and alter'

The reactor at Yongbyon - which was the source for plutonium for North Korea's nuclear weapons programme - was closed in July 2007 as part of a disarmament-for-aid deal.

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Timeline: Korean tensions

- **12 Dec:** North Korea fires three-stage rocket, in move condemned by UN as banned test of long-range missile technology
- **12 Feb:** North Korea conducts an underground nuclear test, its third after tests in 2006 and 2009
- **11 Mar:** US-South Korea annual joint military drills begin
- **19 Mar:** US flies B-52 nuclear-capable bombers over Korean peninsula, following several North Korean threats
- **27 Mar:** North Korea cuts military hotline with South
- **28 Mar:** US flies B-2 stealth bombers over Korean peninsula
- **30 Mar:** North Korea says it is entering a "state of war" with South Korea
- **2 Apr:** North Korea says it is restarting mothballed Yongbyon reactor
- [How potent are North Korea's threats?](#)

The cooling tower at the facility was later destroyed, but then the disarmament deal stalled.

Part of the reason the agreement fell apart was because the US did not believe Pyongyang was fully disclosing all of its nuclear facilities - a suspicion later bolstered when North Korea unveiled a uranium enrichment facility at Yongbyon to US scientist Siegfried Hecker in 2010.

While it appeared to be for electricity generation purposes, Mr Hecker said the facility could be readily converted to produce highly-enriched uranium for bombs.

The statement, carried by KCNA news agency, was attributed to a spokesman for the General Department of Atomic Energy.

The department had decided "to adjust and alter the uses of the existing nuclear facilities" including "readjusting and restarting all the nuclear facilities in Nyongbyon [Yongbyon] including uranium enrichment plant and 5MW graphite moderated reactor".

The work would be put into practice without delay, the statement said. It also attributed the move to the need to generate more electricity.

In a [November 2010 report following his visit to Yongbyon](#), Siegfried Hecker said based on what he saw he believed North Korea could "resume all plutonium operations within approximately six months" at Yongbyon if so inclined.

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Yongbyon nuclear complex

- North Korea's main nuclear facility; thought to have produced the material for North Korea's 2006 and 2009 nuclear tests
- Reactor shut down in July 2007 as part of a disarmament-for-aid deal
- Cooling tower dismantled in 2008
- IAEA inspectors banned from the complex in April 2009 when North Korea pulled out of disarmament talks
- The reactor had been used to reprocess spent nuclear fuel rods to extract weapons-grade plutonium
- Experts believe that, if re-started, it could make one bomb's worth of plutonium per year
- A uranium enrichment facility was revealed at the complex in 2010. An American nuclear scientist who visited the complex said he saw "more than 1,000 centrifuges" for enriching uranium. He said the centrifuges appeared to be primarily for civilian nuclear power, but could be converted to produce highly enriched uranium bomb fuel
- A nuclear test based on a uranium device would be harder to monitor than one from a plutonium device

The reactor can produce spent fuel rods that can be made into plutonium - which experts believe North Korea used for its nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009. It is not clear whether plutonium or uranium was used in the February test.

The reference to altering nuclear facilities could suggest that North Korea may begin openly enriching uranium to weapons-grade levels, which would give it a second, faster route to making nuclear weapons, reports the BBC's Lucy Williamson, who is in Seoul.

US warship deployed

In the weeks since the nuclear test, North Korea's rhetoric has escalated - including multiple threats of attacks on US bases in South Korea and Japan, and on South Korean border islands.

But the US, which has in recent days flown B-52 bombers, B-2 stealth planes and F-22 stealth bombers over South Korea in a show of strength, says it is seeing no signs of increased military activity in North Korea.

"Despite the harsh rhetoric we're hearing from Pyongyang, we are not seeing changes to the North Korean military posture, such as large-scale mobilisations and positioning of forces," White House spokesman Jay Carney said.

But he said the US was "monitoring the Korean situation very diligently".

Defence officials told reporters that a US Aegis-class warship capable of defending against missile strikes had also been moved to the south-west coast off South Korea.

This would offer "greater missile defence options should [they] become necessary", an official told Reuters news agency.

Reports also suggest the US is moving a sea-based radar platform called SBX-1 into the

western Pacific so that it can monitor North Korea.

29 March 2013 Last updated at 03:40 GMT

North Korea 'readies rocket force' after US stealth flights



North Korea called the stealth bombers flown over South Korea on Thursday 'a dangerous provocation'

North Korea says it has put missile units on stand-by to attack US targets in response to US stealth bomber flights over the Korean peninsula.

State news agency KCNA said leader Kim Jong-un signed off on the order at a late-night meeting of top generals.

The time had come to "settle accounts" with the US, KCNA quoted him as saying, with the B-2 flights an "ultimatum".

Pyongyang has been angered by fresh UN sanctions and annual US-South Korea military drills.

"If they make a reckless provocation with huge strategic forces, the Korean People's Army should mercilessly strike the US mainland, their stronghold, their military bases in the operational theatres in the Pacific, including Hawaii and Guam, and those in South Korea," KNCA quoted Kim Jong-un as saying.

The US - which flew two stealth bombers over the peninsula on Thursday as part of the ongoing military drills - has said it is ready for "any eventuality" on the peninsula.

[In a statement](#), it said that the B-2 planes demonstrated America's ability to "provide extended deterrence" to its allies and conduct "long-range, precision strikes quickly and at will".

"The North Koreans have to understand that what they're doing is very dangerous," US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel told reporters on Thursday. "We must make clear that these provocations by the North are taken by us very seriously and we'll respond to that."

Tensions in the Korean peninsula are high following North Korea's third nuclear test on 12 February, which led to the imposition of a fresh raft of sanctions.

North Korea has made multiple threats against both the US and South Korea in recent weeks, including warning of a "pre-emptive nuclear strike" on the US and the scrapping of the Korean War armistice.

North Korea is not thought to have the technology to strike the US mainland with either a nuclear weapon or a ballistic missile, but it is capable of targeting some US military bases in Asia with its mid-range missiles.

On Wednesday, Pyongyang cut a military hotline with the south - the last direct official link between the two nations.

16 March 2013 Last updated at 14:42 GMT

North Korea tells South to leave islands



Four South Koreans were killed when Yeonpyeong was shelled in 2010

A North Korean propaganda website has warned of strikes against Southern islands and advised residents to leave.

The Uriminzokkiri website, linked to the regime, mentioned targets including Yeonpyeong island, which was attacked by Northern forces in 2010.

Pyongyang has made a series of threats since its last nuclear test in February prompted the UN to tighten sanctions.

The US said on Friday it would refocus missile defences to its west coast to counter the North's threats.

Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel said 14 more batteries would be placed in Alaska by 2017, adding to 30 already in place along the coast.

'War games'

On 12 February the North tested a nuclear device, which is believed to be its third such test.

The UN Security Council condemned the move and tightened sanctions on the regime.

Before and after the UN announcement, Pyongyang promised reprisals for the sanctions, including a threat to launch a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the US.

North Korean media has also been vitriolic against the South.

The Uriminzokkiri website stated: "Even an accidental spark by the belligerents in their war games can grow into a fire.

"And the damage for those living along the border and on the five western islands will be great."

The threats came shortly after South Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won visited Yeonpyeong.

The US and South Korea also began military drills earlier in the week.

South Korea's western islands are regarded as being particularly vulnerable to attack as they lie 10km (six miles) south of the sea boundary.

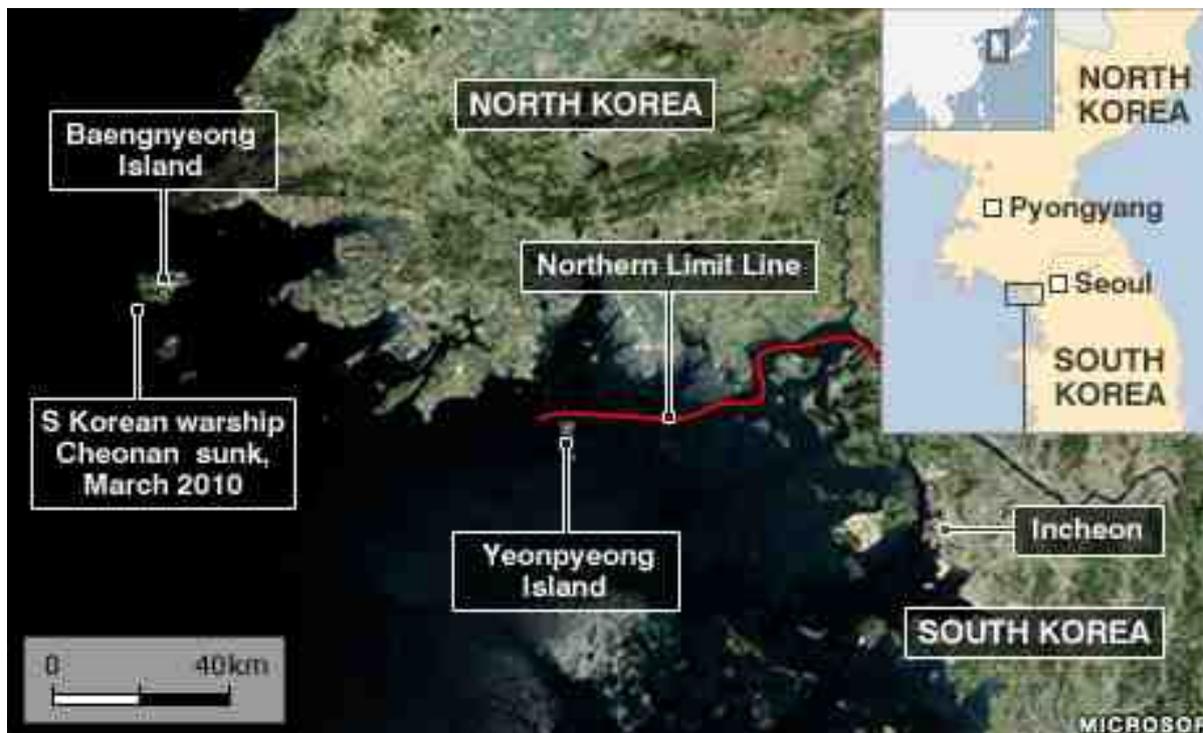
In 2010, the North bombarded Yeonpyeong with artillery shells, causing four deaths.

North Korea's foreign policy has for decades been dominated by threats of military strikes, and bartering over its nuclear programme.

Although Pyongyang has given up parts of its nuclear programme in return for aid, it has continued to develop missiles and enrich nuclear material.

The most advanced missiles have the capacity to reach Alaska.

It is not thought to have a missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead.



16 March 2013 Last updated at 02:25 GMT

US to boost nuclear missile defence to

counter N Korea



Chuck Hagel: "The American people should be assured our interceptors are effective"

The US plans to bolster its missile defences on the west coast to counter the threat from North Korea, Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel has announced.

He said the US would add 14 interceptors, which can shoot down missiles in flight, to 30 already in place in California and Alaska by 2017.

Mr Hagel cited a "series of irresponsible and reckless provocations" recently by North Korea.

Pyongyang carried out a third nuclear test last month.

A statement in North Korean state media last month also threatened the US with a pre-emptive nuclear strike.

Europe plan shelved

However, analysts say the regime is years away from producing a missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead to the US.

"The US has missile defences to protect us from limited ICBM [Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile] attacks," Mr Hagel told Friday's press conference.

"But North Korea in particular has recently made advances in its capabilities and has engaged in a series of irresponsible and reckless provocations."

The defence secretary said the US needed to "stay ahead of the threat".



North Korea has recently ramped up anti-US rhetoric

He said the additional 14 interceptors would be deployed to Fort Greely in Alaska at a cost of about \$1bn (£660m).

As part of the strategy, the US will also deploy a radar-tracking station in Japan.

The Pentagon will shift some of the funding away from the missile defence programme it has been setting up in Europe.

Mr Hagel said US commitment remained "ironclad" to the European shield, and that missile batteries would be established in Poland and Romania by 2018.

But he said the another part of the plan had been shelved.

James Miller, Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Policy at the Department of Defence, later clarified that the final phase of the missile defence programme had been dropped.

"The prior plan had four phases. The third phase involved the deployment of interceptors in Poland. And we will continue with phases one through three," Mr Miller told reporters.

"In the fourth phase, in the previous plan, we would have added some additional type of interceptors - the so-called SM-3 IIB would have been added to the mix in Poland.

"We no longer intend to add them to the mix, but we'll continue to have the same number of deployed interceptors in Poland that will provide coverage for all of Nato in Europe," he added.

President George W Bush first proposed a defence shield in Europe, which had incensed Russia.

His successor Barack Obama rolled back on the plans, announcing a much smaller deployment.

Friday's announcement represents a further toning down of the plans.

The Pentagon said its top North Korea official would be visiting Russia and Germany next week.

The Alaska and California sites were built during the presidency of George W Bush as protection from a possible strike by North Korea.

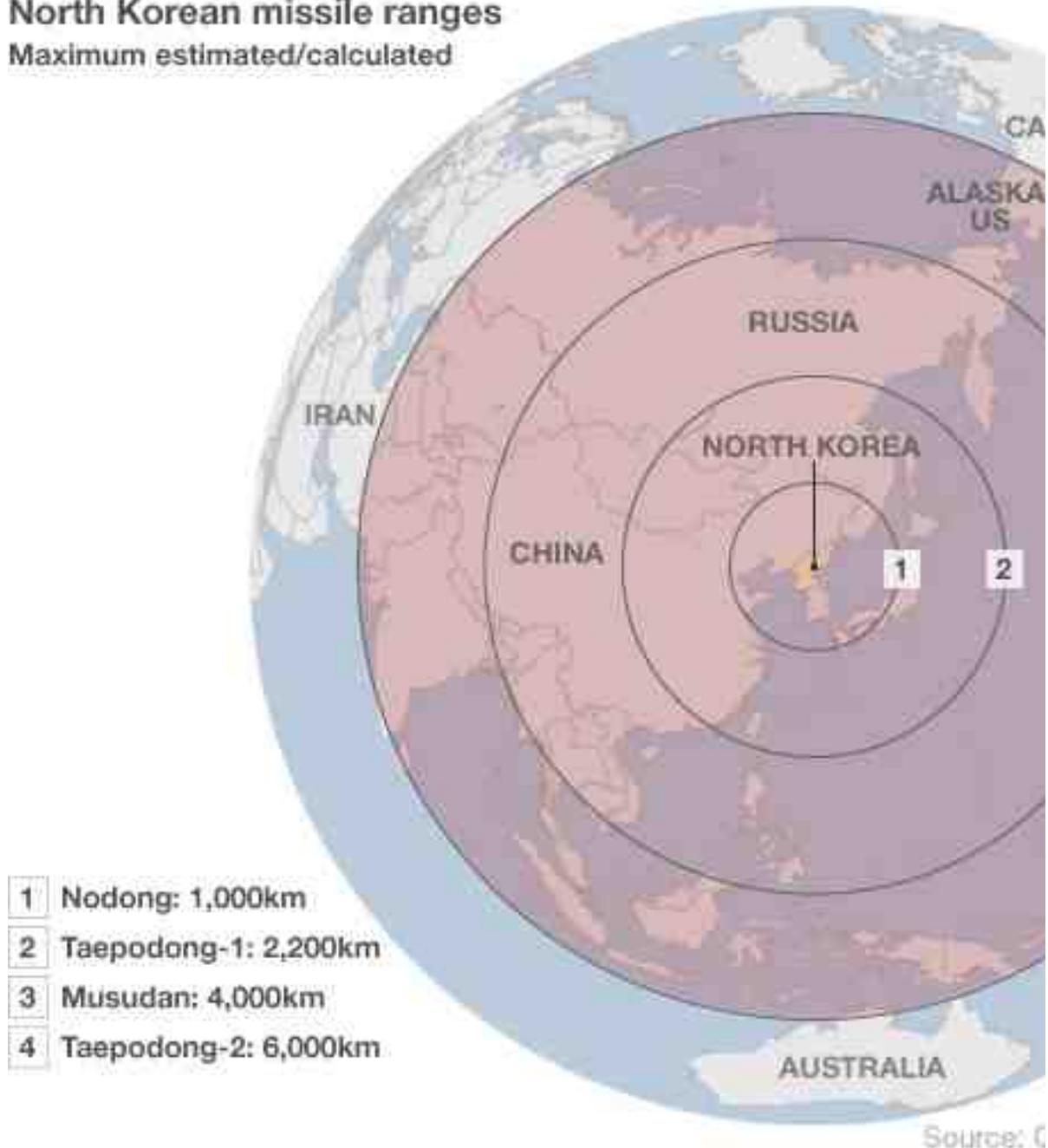
Technical difficulties with the interceptors slowed their installation.

When asked about the "poor performance" of interceptors during recent trials, Mr Hagel said further tests would be carried out this year.

"We have confidence in our system," he said, "and we certainly will not go forward with the addition of the 14 interceptors until we're sure we have the complete confidence we need."

North Korean missile ranges

Maximum estimated/calculated



15 March 2013 Last updated at 09:10 GMT

North Korea says US 'behind hack attack'



Tension has escalated on the Korean peninsula following the 12 February nuclear test

North Korea has accused the US and its allies of attacks on its internet servers, amid tension on the peninsula.

KCNA news agency said the "intensive and persistent" attacks coincided with US-South Korea military drills.

Official sites such as KCNA, Air Koryo and Rodong Sinmun, the party newspaper, are reported to have been inaccessible on some occasions in recent days.

Tension has escalated in the wake of North Korea's third nuclear test last month.

The test led to fresh UN sanctions being imposed on Pyongyang, which has responded with strong rhetoric - both to the UN move and the annual joint drills, which it bitterly opposes.

It says it has scrapped the Korean War armistice and ended non-aggression pacts with Seoul. It has also cut off a hotline that connects the two countries.

The two Koreas remain technically at war because the 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice, not a treaty. South Korea says North Korea cannot unilaterally dissolve the armistice and has called on Pyongyang to tone down its language.

North Korea called the cyber attack a "cowardly and despicable act".

"It is nobody's secret that the US and South Korean puppet regime are massively bolstering up cyber forces in a bid to intensify the subversive activities and sabotages against the DPRK [North Korea]," KCNA said.

Accusations of cyber attacks on the peninsula usually flow in the opposite direction, says the BBC's Lucy Williamson in Seoul.

South Korean intelligence sources say North Korea routinely attempts to access the network here, and Pyongyang is believed to have broken into Defence Ministry data at least once in the past few years, our correspondent adds.

The cause of the disruption remains unclear.

Current internet access in North Korea is extremely limited for locals, with most people only having access to a small number of state-run pages. The wider internet is available only to the government and the military.



8 March 2013 Last updated at 05:01 GMT

North Korea ends peace pacts with South



The Panmunjom border crossing is in the Demilitarized Zone

North Korea says it is scrapping all non-aggression pacts with South Korea, closing its hotline with Seoul and shutting their shared border point.

The announcement follows a fresh round of UN sanctions punishing Pyongyang for its nuclear test last month.

Earlier, Pyongyang said it reserved the right to a pre-emptive nuclear strike against its "aggressors".

The US said it took the threats seriously, but that "extreme rhetoric" was not unusual for Pyongyang.

South Korea's defence ministry said that the North would become "extinct" if it went through with its threat.

The North Korean announcement, carried on the KCNA state news agency, said the North was cancelling all non-aggression pacts with the South and closing the main Panmunjom border crossing inside the Demilitarized Zone.

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Dr John Swenson-Wright Chatham House

The threatened pre-emptive nuclear strike seems more bluff than reality, since the North's

leaders know it would be suicidal, and an attack on the US seems impracticable given the still technically rudimentary quality of the North's ballistic missile programme and the unproven state of its nuclear miniaturisation technology needed to place a nuclear warhead atop a missile.

A more troubling possibility is that the North might choose - out of irritation with the UN - to precipitate a border clash with South Korea, either on land or sea, as it did before in 2010.

- [Will sanctions persuade or provoke?](#)

It also said it was notifying the South that it was "immediately" cutting off the North-South hotline.

The hotline, installed in 1971, is intended as a means of direct communication at a time of high tension, but is also used to co-ordinate the passage of people and goods through the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone.

KCNA said the hotline, which has been severed several times before, "can no longer perform its mission due to the prevailing grave situation".

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un is also reported to have visited front-line military units that were involved in the shelling of a South Korean island in 2010.

KCNA said he had urged the soldiers there to keep themselves ready to "annihilate the enemy" at any time, and reconfirmed so-called "enemy targets" on five islands in the West Sea.

'Extreme rhetoric'

Seoul's defence ministry spokesman Kim Min-seok said that if the North were to carry out a nuclear attack on South Korea it would become "extinct from the Earth by the will of mankind".



North Korean TV has been showing images of Kim Jong-un visiting troops at undisclosed locations

He also warned that in response to any provocation from the North, Seoul would "immediately" turn the US-South Korean military drills currently being conducted "into a punishment mode to respond to it as planned".

The US, the main focus of North Korean ire, said it was capable of protecting itself and its allies from any attacks.

"One has to take what any government says seriously," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said of the nuclear threat.

"It is for that reason that I repeat here that we are fully capable of defending the United States. But I would also say that this kind of extreme rhetoric has not been unusual for this regime,

unfortunately."

Senator Robert Menendez, who chairs the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said North Korea knew what the cost of any attack would be.

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Resolution 2094

- Strongly condemns North Korea's ongoing nuclear activities, including its uranium enrichment programme
- Imposes new sanctions to block financial transactions and bulk cash transfers in support of illicit activity
- Strengthens states' authority to inspect suspicious cargo
- Requires states to deny port access to any North Korean vessel that refuses to be inspected
- Calls on states to deny permission to any aircraft to take off, land in or overfly their territory if the aircraft is suspected of transporting prohibited items
- Enables stronger enforcement of existing sanctions by UN member states
- Sanctions new individuals and entities

"I don't think that the regime in Pyongyang wants to commit suicide, but that as they must surely know, that would be the result of any attack on the United States," he said.

On Thursday, the UN Security Council in New York unanimously backed Resolution 2094, imposing the fourth set of sanctions against the North.

The resolution targets North Korean diplomats, cash transfers and access to luxury goods.

It imposes asset freezes and travel bans on three individuals and two firms linked to North Korea's military.

South Korea's ambassador to the UN, Kim Sook, said it was time for North Korea to "wake up from its delusion" of becoming a nuclear state.

"It can either take the right path toward a bright future and prosperity, or it can take a bad road toward further and deeper isolation and eventual self-destruction," he said.

US ambassador to the UN Susan Rice said the sanctions would "further constrain" North Korea's ability to develop its nuclear programme.

She warned that the UN would "take further significant actions" if Pyongyang were to carry out another nuclear test.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang issued a statement supporting the UN resolution and describing it as a "moderate response".

He said China - North Korea's sole ally - urged "relevant parties" to stay calm and said the main priority was to "defuse the tensions, bring down heat" and restart negotiations with Pyongyang.

Before the UN vote, Pyongyang accused the US of pushing to start a war.

"As long as the United States is willing to spark nuclear war, our forces will exercise their right

to a pre-emptive nuclear strike," said North Korea's foreign ministry, in a statement carried by the KCNA news agency.

7 March 2013 Last updated at 17:11 GMT

UN adopts tough new North Korea sanctions after nuclear test



US ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, said the sanctions on luxury goods would "bite hard" for North Korean officials

The UN Security Council has unanimously approved fresh sanctions against North Korea in response to Pyongyang's nuclear test last month.

The resolution is targeting North Korean diplomats, cash transfers and access to luxury goods.

It imposes asset freezes and travel bans on three individuals and two firms linked to North Korea's military.

Pyongyang earlier vowed to use its right to a pre-emptive nuclear attack against its "aggressors".

'Grave threat'

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Analysis



Jonathan Marcus BBC Diplomatic Correspondent

This is the fourth set of UN Security Council sanctions directed against North Korea following earlier nuclear tests and a long-range missile launch.

Previous measures may have slowed the development of these systems but they have done little to change Pyongyang's behaviour.

China backed the previous rounds of sanctions, too. Much will depend upon how far Beijing is actually prepared to implement new and existing sanctions.

Some wonder if this vote, coming as a new Chinese leadership is establishing itself, may signify - at the very least - a signal of a desire for a more constructive relationship with Washington.

Of course, the big question is how will North Korea respond.

It has huffed and puffed in advance, even threatening a pre-emptive nuclear strike against the US.

This is a highly charged moment on the Korean Peninsula and perhaps the greatest test yet for North Korea's young and inexperienced leader Kim Jong-un.

In a 15-0 vote, the council on Thursday backed Resolution 2094, imposing the fourth set of sanctions against the North.

Speaking after the vote, the US ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, said the document "strongly condemns" Pyongyang's actions.

She said the sanctions would "further constrain" North Korea's ability to develop its nuclear programme.

And Ms Rice warned that the UN would "take further significant actions" if Pyongyang were to carry out another nuclear test.

"North Korea will achieve nothing by continuing threats and provocations," she stressed, urging the North to comply with the demands of the international community.

China's UN ambassador, Li Baodong, said that "the top priority now is to defuse the tensions" on the Korean peninsula.

Mr Li also said that the six-party talks on the North's controversial programme must resume.

South Korea's envoy to the UN, Kim Sook, described the North's nuclear tests as "grave threat to the peace" on the Korean peninsula and the wider region.

Mr Kim urged Pyongyang to respond to the concerns of the world community. "North Korea's future rests in its own hands," he said.

Russian ambassador Vitaly Churkin, who is the current president of the council, described the resolution as an "appropriate measure".

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Resolution 2094

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- Enables stronger enforcement of existing sanctions by UN member states
- Sanctions new individuals and entities

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the measure "sent an unequivocal message to (North Korea) that the international community will not tolerate its pursuit of nuclear weapons."

Pyongyang has so far made no comments following Thursday's vote.

But earlier it accused the US of pushing to start a war.

"As long as the United States is willing to spark nuclear war, our forces will exercise their right to a pre-emptive nuclear strike," said North Korea's foreign ministry, in a statement carried by the KCNA news agency, without giving further details.

Earlier this week, Pyongyang also threatened to scrap the 60-year truce which ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

February's nuclear test, North Korea's third, followed its apparently successful launch in December of a three-stage rocket - a move condemned by the UN as a banned test of missile technology.

Pyongyang claims its nuclear test involved a smaller and more powerful device - prompting concerns it could be moving closer to creating a warhead small enough to arm a missile.

7 March 2013 Last updated at 10:18 GMT

North Korea ramps up nuclear rhetoric as UN vote looms



Concerns is growing that North Korea has moved closer to making a deliverable nuclear device

North Korea has ramped up rhetoric ahead of a UN vote on sanctions in response to its nuclear test.

Accusing the US of pushing to start a war, it vowed to exercise its right to launch a pre-emptive nuclear attack against its aggressors.

The Security Council meets later today to approve fresh sanctions against Pyongyang over the 12 February test.

Earlier this week, North Korea also threatened to scrap the 60-year truce which ended the Korean War.

"As long as the United States is willing to spark nuclear war our forces will exercise their right to a pre-emptive nuclear strike," said North Korea's foreign ministry, in a statement carried by the KCNA news agency, without giving further details.

The BBC's Lucy Williamson in Seoul says most analysts believe Pyongyang is unlikely to start a war with the US, and may instead be trying to provoke a fresh stance from Washington ahead of the UN vote.

But the atmosphere on the Korean Peninsula is more tense than usual, our correspondent adds, after North Korea said that it would tear up the armistice agreement next week.

The two Koreas remain technically at war in the wake of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended with an armistice, not a formal peace treaty.

North Korea's military command said it would end that armistice on 11 March, threatening "surgical strikes" on its southern neighbour and the use of a "precision nuclear striking tool" in response to the sanctions and ongoing South Korea-US military drills.

South-US drills

South Korea warned earlier this week that it would respond to any provocation from its northern neighbour.

[Continue reading the main story.](#)

The 1953 cease-fire



The agreement provided for:

- A suspension of open hostilities
- A fixed demarcation line with a four kilometre (2.4 mile) buffer zone ("demilitarisation zone")
- A mechanism for the transfer of prisoners of war
- [The Korean War armistice](#)

On Thursday, a spokesman for the South Korean Defence Ministry, Kim Min-seok, said Pyongyang had been observed carrying out "various drills involving the army, navy and air force," and that further exercises were being prepared, the Yonhap news agency reports.

He said South Korea was taking "great interest in these activities," giving the view that such training could be "extended into a provocation at any time".

Officials also told Yonhap the North had imposed no-fly and no-sail zones off its east and west coasts, an indication that it could be planning to test-fire missiles.

Seoul is itself conducting military drills at the moment, in its annual joint manoeuvres with the US army, involving some 13,000 troops from both sides. The North views the drills as a provocation and as preparation for war.

The UN Security Council, meanwhile, will vote on the sanctions resolutions on North Korea at 10:00 EST (15:00 GMT).

The resolution, which is expected to pass, was proposed by China and the US, and will target North Korea's diplomats, cash transfers and access to luxury goods.

It will also impose asset freezes and travel bans on three individuals and two corporations linked to North Korea's military.

The sanctions have been described by Washington's UN ambassador Susan Rice as "some of the toughest sanctions" the UN had ever imposed.

Meanwhile, Australia has put on hold plans to reopen a North Korea embassy in its capital, Canberra.

Patrick Low, a spokesman for the Australian foreign ministry, said there was still "some merit" in having a North Korean embassy in Australia, including enabling more direct communication on human rights issues.

But said the plans had been frozen "until further notice" while Australia worked with the UN Security Council on its response to North Korea's nuclear test.

North Korea first opened an embassy in Australia in 2002, but closed it in 2008 for financial reasons.

The nuclear test, North Korea's third, followed its apparently successful launch in December of a three-stage rocket - a move condemned by the UN as a banned test of missile technology.

Pyongyang claims its nuclear test involved a smaller and more powerful device - prompting concerns it could be moving closer to creating a warhead small enough to arm a missile.

5 March 2013 Last updated at 04:53 GMT

China and US 'agree North Korea nuclear test measures'



North Korea celebrated the test as a necessary self-defence victory

The US and China have reached a tentative deal on a new sanctions resolution to punish North Korea for its nuclear test, UN diplomats say.

Unnamed diplomats said a deal was agreed late on Monday and they hoped a draft resolution would be put to the Security Council on Tuesday.

The details of what has been agreed have not been announced.

North Korea carried out its third and most powerful nuclear test in February, sparking worldwide condemnation.

It was the first such test under new leader Kim Jong-un, who took over the leadership after his father Kim Jong-il died in December 2011.

Pyongyang said the nuclear test was a "self-defensive measure" made necessary by the "continued hostility" of the US.

Nuclear test monitors based in Vienna say the underground explosion had double the force of the last test, in 2009, despite the use of a device said by the North to be smaller.

North Korea claimed that a "miniaturised" device had been tested, increasing fears that

Pyongyang had moved closer to building a warhead small enough to arm a missile.

The test came weeks after Pyongyang successfully used a rocket to put a satellite into space, a move condemned by the UN as a banned test of missile technology.

China is North Korea's only ally and its major trading partner. Beijing has been reluctant to support tougher sanctions in the past, citing the impact of potential instability inside its secretive neighbour state. With the recent test, however, its stance appears to have changed somewhat.

A UN diplomat told AFP there had been "tough talks" between China and the US on the issue and that a vote on the draft would happen "soon", though it was unlikely to be at Tuesday's session.

Another diplomat told Reuters that whether a draft was circulated on Tuesday was "up to the Americans".

The UN press office said Russia, which this month holds the presidency at the Security Council, would hold closed-doors talks on Tuesday morning.

North Korea is already subject to a raft of sanctions affecting individuals and government bodies, restricting financial activities and barring any trade or test of ballistics and nuclear technology.

15 February 2013 Last updated at 04:24 GMT

North Korea 'upgrading rocket launch site'



The most recent launch came from the Sohae site, but North Korea is also upgrading Musudan-ri

North Korea appears to be upgrading one of its two rocket launch sites, US experts say, perhaps in a move to test bigger rockets.

"Important progress" had been made at Tonghae Satellite Launching Ground since October 2012, the analysis from the 38 North website said.

Activities around the new launch pad also revealed possible evidence of assistance from Iran, it said.

Pyongyang used a three-stage rocket to put a satellite into space last year.

That launch - condemned by the UN as a banned test of missile technology - took place at the

Sohae launch site.

But previous unsuccessful attempts in 2006 and 2009 took place at the Tonghae site, which is also known as Musudan-ri.

[The analysis from 38 North](#), the website of the US-Korea Institute at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Baltimore, was based on satellite imagery.

Construction of the new launch pad was continuing, it said, with images showing Pyongyang would be able to test rockets "perhaps three to four times the size of the Unha [launched in December 2012] when construction is completed, possibly in 2016".

Two new design features were similar to those used at the Semnan Launch Complex in Iran, it said.

The images also confirmed activity at the old launch pad.

"That activity may be related to another round of modifications intended to support future launches of the Unha rocket or possibly another liquid-fuelled missile," 38 North said, while cautioning that more information was needed.

North Korea last week conducted its third nuclear test, claiming to have successfully detonated a smaller but more powerful device than in previous tests.

The move drew immediate condemnation from the UN Security Council.

Observers fear North Korea is working towards creating a nuclear device small enough to fit on a long-range missile.