

North-Korean Missile Test

written by Ezba Walayat | June 21, 2022



North Korea fired three test missiles, one of which was a suspected ICBM (intercontinental ballistic missile), just hours after President Biden returned from his five-day tour to South Korea and Japan. North Korea fired another eight short-range missiles on June 5, the most it has fired in a single day. According to the United States ambassador to the United Nations, North Korea has already conducted 31 missile tests in 2022 and is prepared to perform a nuclear test; it is a high number of test missiles as compared to the previous year. Nuclear negotiations between the U.S. and North Korea have stalled since 2019. North Korea has long criticized the allies' joint military exercises as invasion rehearsals, countering with short-range missile tests in 2016 and 2017 that simulated nuclear attacks on South Korean ports and US military bases in Japan. As Washington observes North Korean arrangements for a possible nuclear test explosion that foreign authorities fear it could happen in near future, President Joe Biden's special envoy for North Korea said the US is ready for all possibilities in close coordination with its South Korean and Japanese allies.



After months of growing tensions including missile testing and Pyongyang's rejection of efforts from President Joe Biden's administration, the US and South Korea warned that North Korea could test its first nuclear weapon at any time. If North Korea performs a nuclear test, the two partners warned of a quick response including US military "adjustments", but still offered negotiations as a way out one more time. Since March, signs of nuclear test preparation have become seen via satellite at Punggye-ri, which Pyongyang shut down in front of foreign journalists invited to witness its dismantlement in 2018. A United States based think-tank has conducted a new analysis and stated that commercial satellite imagery obtained on June 14 revealed "minor new activity" indicating that the construction work carried out over the previous four months is essentially completed now, and the tunnel is now ready for the speculated seventh nuclear test since 2006 and first since 2017.

North Korea appears to be expanding building operations into a second tunnel at its Punggye-ri, a Nuclear Test Facility, which has nearly completed all the restoration work. This is resulting in escalating tensions between the neighboring countries. North Korea's other regional neighbors are also feeling the pressure, as depicted with Japanese Defense Minister Nobuo Kishi statement stating emphatically that Japan is "on the front lines" as its neighbor attempt to defy international rules. There are no easy solutions for the US and South Korea to stop North Korea's missile program from progressing further. Despite the Biden administration's invitation to meet "without preconditions", North Korea has shown no interest in speaking with the US in recent months and is likely to avoid talks in the future. This type of reorientation is becoming increasingly critical as North Korea gets closer to being able to overwhelm US national missile defenses. Pragmatically, this needs a potential nuclear diplomacy roadmaps as long as North Korea refuses to negotiate with the US.