



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on September 9, 2016

North Korea Conducts Fifth Test of Nuclear Weapon

North Korea announced on state-sponsored Korean Central Television (KCTV) on September 9 that the communist nation had conducted a “higher level” “nuclear explosion test” that “confirmed” certain features needed to mount such weapons on ballistic missiles.

The U.S. Geological Survey detected an artificial 5.3-magnitude earthquake near North Korea’s nuclear test site at 9:00 a.m. local time on September 9.



British online newspaper the Independent quoted extensively from an accompanying transcript for the propaganda-laden KCTV broadcast, stating in part:

The first H-bomb test was successfully conducted in the DPRK [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea] at 10:00 on Wednesday, Juche 105 (2016), pursuant to the strategic determination of the WPK. Through the test conducted with indigenous wisdom, technology and efforts the DPRK fully proved that the technological specifications of the newly developed H-bomb for the purpose of test were accurate and scientifically verified the power of smaller H-bomb.

After noting that the test posed “no adverse impact on the ecological environment” (an almost ludicrous statement, considering the communist regime’s disregard for human rights and the *human* environment), the statement went on to say:

This test is a measure for self-defense the DPRK has taken to firmly protect the sovereignty of the country and the vital right of the nation from the ever-growing nuclear threat and blackmail by the US-led hostile forces and to reliably safeguard the peace on the Korean Peninsula and regional security. Since the appearance of the word hostility in the world there has been no precedent of such deep-rooted, harsh and persistent policy as the hostile policy the US has pursued towards the DPRK.

It is possible that not since the Cold War, when the Soviet Communist Party newspaper *Pravda* routinely castigated the American “imperialist aggressors,” has a communist organ used such strong anti-American language as was found in this KCTV report. Typical of the statements found in the report were:

The DPRK is a genuine peace-loving state which has made all efforts to protect peace on the Korean Peninsula and security in the region from the U.S. vicious nuclear war scenario.

The KCTV report is as lacking in logic as it is heavy in propaganda. The assertion regarding “the ever-growing nuclear threat and blackmail by the US-led hostile forces,” for example, ignores the fact that the only nation near North Korea that possesses nuclear weapons is China, the world’s largest communist nation and a country that has propped up the North Korean economy for years. China’s economic assistance to North Korea — which is sent directly to Pyongyang to bypass the UN — accounts for about half of all Chinese foreign aid.



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China possesses an estimated 260 nuclear weapons.

In contrast, South Korea, a U.S. ally where more than 28,000 American troops are stationed, has no nuclear weapons. Moreover, unlike other U.S.-allied host nations, such as Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey, there are no U.S. nuclear weapons stored in South Korea.

The broadcast described an alleged threat against North Korea posed by the presence of "US imperialist aggressor troops, including nuclear carrier strike group and nuclear strategic flying corps," but, in reality, U.S. troops have not been deployed against North Korea since the 1953 Korean War armistice that ended hostilities, and no nuclear weapons carried by U.S. ships or planes patrolling in international waters and airspace off North Korea have ever been used.

North Korea, however, has engaged in hostile actions against both the United States and South Korea during the years since the 1953 armistice, most notably by its capture of the USS *Pueblo* in international waters in 1968. (Though the *Pueblo's* crew was released after being starved and tortured for 11 months, the *Pueblo* is still in North Korean hands.) North Korea has also engaged in numerous attacks against the South in the years since the official ending of hostilities. One of the most notable of these occurred on March 26, 2010, when the South Korean naval vessel the ROKS *Cheonan* was very likely sunk by a North Korean torpedo near Baengnyeong Island in the Yellow Sea, resulting in the death of 46 sailors aboard the warship. On May 20, 2010, a South Korean-led international investigation group concluded that the sinking of the *Cheonan* was in fact the result of a North Korean torpedo attack.

The White House press office posted a statement from President Obama on September 9 condemning the North Korean nuclear test. The statement read, in part:

The United States condemns North Korea's September 9 nuclear test in the strongest possible terms as a grave threat to regional security and to international peace and stability. North Korea stands out as the only country to have tested nuclear weapons this century. Today's test, North Korea's second this year, follows an unprecedented campaign of ballistic missile launches, which North Korea claims are intended to serve as delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons targeting the United States and our allies, the Republic of Korea and Japan....

To be clear, the United States does not, and never will, accept North Korea as a nuclear state.... Today's nuclear test, a flagrant violation of multiple UN Security Council Resolutions, makes clear North Korea's disregard for international norms and standards for behavior and demonstrates it has no interest in being a responsible member of the international community.

Obama went on to state that after hearing the news of the test, he consulted separately via phone with South Korea's President Park Geun-Hye and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. He said that he and his foreign counterparts agreed to work with "the UN Security Council, our other Six-Party partners [the six-party talks include both Koreas, the United States, China, Japan, and Russia] and the international community to vigorously implement existing measures imposed in previous resolutions, and to take additional significant steps, including new sanctions, to demonstrate to North Korea that there are consequences to its unlawful and dangerous actions."

Obama continued by stating:

I restated to President Park and Prime Minister Abe the unshakable U.S. commitment to take necessary steps to defend our allies in the region, including through our deployment of a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) battery to the ROK, and the commitment to provide extended



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deterrence, guaranteed by the full spectrum of U.S. defense capabilities.

While it must be conceded that North Korea is among the worst states in the world when it comes to human rights and its belligerent foreign policy, there are nevertheless several problematic points to be found in Obama's statement.

The president's statement that United States will never accept North Korea as a nuclear state is a far departure from U.S. foreign policy during the most tense days of the Cold War, when the old Soviet Union (a communist nation that was one of the most tyrannical regimes in existence during the 20th century) engaged in a massive nuclear weapons program, one of the most publicized events of which was the detonation of a 50-megaton hydrogen bomb on October 30, 1961. The Soviet nuclear stockpile, at its peak in 1988, contained 45,000 warheads. (Russia's is now 7,300 warheads.)

Another communist tyrannical regime in China — which was responsible for killing millions of its own citizens — amassed a stockpile of 434 warheads at its peak and is estimated to still possess about 260 warheads.

Yet, despite these threats to U.S. national security, which were magnitudes of order greater than North Korea's, the United States never claimed that we would never accept the Soviet Union or China as nuclear states, and we did not impose sanctions on either nation, nor did the UN do so (although the United States did initiate a boycott of the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow to protest the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan).

If violations of human rights and the possession of a nuclear arsenal were sufficient justification for sanctions, then the shelves of American stores would not now be flooded with goods made in China.

Another troublesome point in Obama's statement was his assurance to President Park and Prime Minister Abe of "unshakable U.S. commitment to take necessary steps to defend our allies in the region."

One can search our Constitution from beginning to end and never find authorization for our government to defend any nation other than our own. This commitment to having the United States defend only its own interests can be found going back to the earliest years of our Republic, and was expressed clearly in an historic address on U.S. foreign policy delivered on July 4, 1821, by Secretary of State John Quincy Adams. Adams said:

Wherever the standard of freedom and independence has been or shall be unfurled, there will [America's] heart, her benedictions and her prayers be. But she goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy. She is the well-wisher to the freedom and independence of all. She is the champion and vindicator only of her own.

North Korea may indeed be a monster, but champions of America's non-interventionist foreign policy during our early years advocated that we not go abroad to destroy them.

How, then should Asia be protected from monsters such as North Korea? Instead of defending our allies in the region, we should encourage them to defend themselves. After World War II, when Japan was under U.S. occupation, we forced Japan to draft a constitution that guaranteed that it could not defend itself. We should encourage Japan to amend that constitution to enable it to do whatever is necessary to build up its military to defend itself.

We should also bring home those 28,000 U.S. troops stationed in South Korea and another 52,000 U.S. troops in Japan. Those forces should be defending the United States, not other countries. We might help



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friendly nations in Asia, including not only Japan and South Korea, but also the Philippines and Taiwan, to strengthen their military capabilities, by *selling* them military technology, such as aircraft. But these should be commercial, for-profit transactions, not foreign aid.

North Korea is unquestionably a menace, but primarily a menace to Asian nations. Those Asian nations must take responsibility for their own defense and not rely on the United States to protect them.

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