



INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DEBATES SANCTIONS AFTER NORTH KOREA'S NUCLEAR TEST CLAIM

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Soon after North Korea announced it had detonated a nuclear weapon Monday, the international community began debating sanctions aimed at forcing the secretive communist country to give up its nuclear activities.

The announcement of a nuclear test by North Korea drew quick condemnation from world leaders -- allies and foes alike.

President Bush called the claim "a threat to international peace and security," and urged the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution to punish North Korea.

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, Chinese President Hu Jintao, South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe echoed the U.S. president's criticism of North Korea as the U.N. Security Council continued to negotiate terms of a resolution that could include trade and transport sanctions.

The United States has proposed cargo inspections aimed at halting North Korea's nuclear and conventional weapons programs, and other "illicit activities" such as counterfeiting and drug running.

Japan tightening sanctions

Japan, which had already imposed some travel and financial sanctions on North Korea following missile tests in July, is pushing for the harshest measures.

Japan's cabinet announced it would ban all imports from North Korea and prevent all North Korean ships from entering Japanese ports.

"The country whose security is most affected by these actions by North Korea is Japan," Japan's chief cabinet secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki told reporters, Reuters reported.

Damaged relations with ally China

China, which is both a major trading partner of North Korea and a powerful, veto-holding member of the U.N. Security Council, said the nuclear test would have a negative effect on relations with North Korea.

The nuclear test was an embarrassment to China, which had claimed it could use its diplomatic connections to convince North Korea not to go forward with a nuclear test.

China's U.N. ambassador called for "a firm, constructive, appropriate but prudent response to North Korea's nuclear threat."

Sanctions on foreign aid

Both China and South Korea support food and aid programs in North Korea, where Human Rights Watch said 1 million North Koreans died from starvation in the 1990s, and millions are now at risk.

The group warned against sanctions on aid, saying "North Korea's nuclear weapons program can have devastating security implications in the region, but suspending food aid could be lethal for ordinary North Koreans."

South Korea suspended aid after North Korea's summer missile test and has increased military readiness at the heavily guarded demilitarized zone between the two countries.

But the neighbor has taken a soft approach since the nuclear test announcement.

"South Korea will seek a stern yet calm and strategically coordinated measure to deal with the nuclear crisis," the country's president, Roh Moo-hyun, said Monday, the Associated Press reported.

Moon Chung-in, a South Korean ambassador, told the Times, "Let's face the reality: North Korea is a nuclear power and it won't be easy to change that. ... Now we've got to learn how to live with it."

Failed diplomatic efforts

The test came after years of diplomatic wrangling.

In 1994, North Korea promised to freeze its nuclear weapons program in return for aid, but, in 2003, prevented international inspections and withdrew from the nuclear nonproliferation treaty.

After a framework was developed for negotiation with China, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States, North Korea abandoned the six-party discussions in 2005, demanding -- unsuccessfully -- one-on-one talks with the United States.

North Korea focused on the United States

As North Korea pledged continued nuclear tests Wednesday, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the United States to participate in talks, even one-on-one if needed.

North Korea's foreign ministry said, via the state-controlled Korean Central News Agency, "We are ready for both dialogue and confrontation" with the United States, the Associated Press reported.

The statement also said if the United States continued to take a "hostile attitude," the North Korean government would consider it a declaration of war.

President Bush said Wednesday the United States has "no intentions of attacking" North Korea but added that the United States "reserves all options to defend our friends in the region."

Ri Jong-hyok, a member of North Korea's legislature, defended North Korea's right to develop a nuclear deterrent.

"Our country has been under severe sanctions and threats by the United States for more than 60 years. It is in our supreme interest and that of the security of our state to defend ourselves when serious threats appear," Ri said, Reuters reported.

Ri said North Korea would only resume an international discussion if Washington lifted financial sanctions.

-- *Compiled by Adnaan Wasey for NewsHour Extra*

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