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North Korea warns US it is ready to use nuclear weapons

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North Korea threatened Tuesday to use nuclear weapons against the United States as it announced that it has restarted operation of its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon complex, Yonhap reports.



“All the nuclear facilities in Yongbyon including the uranium enrichment plant and 5 megawatt reactor were rearranged, changed or readjusted and they started normal operation,” the director of the Atomic Energy Institute said in a comment carried by the North’s official Korean Central News Agency.

The unidentified director also warned that North Korea is fully ready to use nuclear weapons against the United States and other countries Pyongyang claims are hostile toward North Korea.

Earlier Tuesday, South Korea warned North Korea against conducting a long-range rocket launch, a day after Pyongyang hinted it may launch a satellite during a key political anniversary next month, VoA reports.

Such an act would be a “serious provocation” and a violation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions banning the North from conducting ballistic missile tests, according to South Korean presidential spokesman Kim Min-seok.

North Korean officials Monday vowed to move ahead with plans to launch what they say is a weather satellite into orbit. They gave no timeframe for such a launch, but there has been speculation it could happen October 10, the 70th anniversary of the North’s ruling Worker’s Party.

While North Korea insists the launch has peaceful purposes, the US and its ally, South Korea, along with many other nations view such moves as disguised tests of the same technology used in ballistic missiles.

After repeated failed attempts, the North successfully placed a weather satellite into orbit in 2012 – a major technological achievement that brought another punishing round of international sanctions against the isolated, communist state.

A fresh rocket launch risks disrupting a period of warming relations between the two Koreas. The two sides in August exchanged artillery fire near their border, but later signed a landmark agreement to improve ties.

Under the deal, the two Koreas next month plan to resume a program of meetings meant to reconnect families separated for decades by their 1950s conflict. Leaders from both countries also plan to hold a series of meetings to discuss improving relations.

Relations between Seoul and Pyongyang are notoriously rocky. The two sides remain in a technical state of war since the Korean War ended in a truce instead of a formal peace treaty.

Japan Tuesday urged North Korea to refrain from taking provocative action and to continue cooperation with the United States and South Korea.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, the Japanese government’s top spokesman, told a news conference that North Korea should also comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions.

US State Department spokesman John Kirby said if North Korea uses ballistic missile technology to launch a satellite, Pyongyang would be in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

“There are multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions that require North Korea to suspend all activities related to their ballistic missile program and re-establish a moratorium on missile launches,” Kirby said. “So any satellite launch using ballistic missile technology would be a clear violation of those resolutions.”