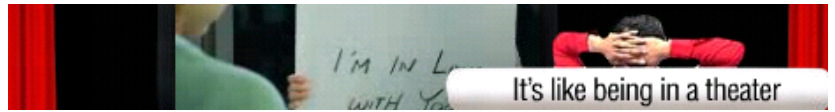




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## Politics/Diplomacy

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### (3rd LD) N. Korea gearing up to test-fire missiles on both coasts

By Sam Kim

SEOUL, June 2 (Yonhap) -- North Korea appears to be preparing on both coasts to test-fire some of its most sophisticated ballistic missiles, stoking regional tensions already running high after its second nuclear test last week, South Korean sources said Tuesday.

North Korea, which set off an underground nuclear explosion on May 25, has apparently moved an intercontinental ballistic missile to a launch site on its west coast, a South Korean lawmaker said, quoting defense officials who briefed him hours earlier.

A South Korean government source said that at least three medium-range missiles were being prepared at the Kittaeryong missile base on the southeast coast. He and the lawmaker did not know how far those missiles would be capable of flying.

North Korea is believed to have about 800 missiles, including ones that can theoretically hit Guam, which is approximately 3,000 kilometers from the communist country and is home to a U.S. military base.

North Korea has deployed intermediate-range ballistic missiles in recent years, but they have yet to be fully tested, the South Korean Ministry of National Defense believes.

"Several mobile launch vehicles were spotted at the Kittaeryong site," the government source said, declining to be identified. "We expect at least three will be fired."

Earlier Tuesday, the lawmaker, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he was told that an intercontinental ballistic missile has been moved to a newly built launch site on the west coast.

"We've been briefed that an intercontinental ballistic missile was moved to Dongchang-ri last week" from a munitions factory near Pyongyang, he said. "North Korea may go ahead with simultaneous launches."

The legislator was visiting the ministry with fellow members of the parliamentary national security committee to inspect the Joint Chiefs of Staff

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command chamber.

North Korea, which fired six medium- and short-range missiles from the Kittaeryong site in July 2006 when it tested a Taepodong-2 long-range missile, is banned from further testing under a U.N. resolution.

Resolution 1718 was adopted after North Korea carried out its first nuclear test in October 2006. South Korea and the U.S. believe the April 5 rocket launch by North Korea was also a test of ballistic missile technology despite Pyongyang's claims that it was meant to put a satellite in orbit.

Kittaeryong is located in Anbyon County, Gangwon Province. The province is shared by the two Koreas that remain technically at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce rather than a peace treaty.

The U.S., which has 28,500 troops stationed here as a deterrent against North Korea, agreed with South Korea to step up their joint surveillance to the highest level since 2006.

The allies believe North Korea could develop a long-range missile capable of hitting Alaska and Hawaii if it perfects the technology. But they downplay the possibility of the North having obtained the ability to miniaturize nuclear warheads to tip intercontinental missiles with.

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