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## North Korea and Iran – partners in nuclear and missile programs

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DEBKAFfile: North Korea N-bomb test sites attended by Iranians

There is full awareness in Washington and Jerusalem that the North Korean nuclear test conducted Tuesday, Feb. 12, brings Iran that much closer to conducting a test of its own. A completed bomb or warhead are not necessary for an underground nuclear test; a device which an aircraft or missile can carry is enough.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's boast this week that Iran will soon place a satellite in orbit at an altitude of 36,000 kilometers - and Tehran's claim on Feb. 4 to have sent a monkey into space – highlight Iran's role in the division of labor Pyongyang and Tehran have achieved in

years of collaboration: the former focusing on a nuclear armament and the latter on long-range missile technology to deliver it.

Their advances are pooled. Pyongyang maintains a permanent mission of nuclear and missile scientists in Tehran, whereas Iranian experts are in regular attendance at North Korea's nuclear and missile tests.

Since the detonation of the “miniature atomic bomb” reported by Pyongyang Tuesday - which US President Barack Obama called “a threat to US National security”- Iran must be presumed to have acquired the same “miniature atomic bomb” capabilities - or even assisted in the detonation.

Word of the North Korean atomic test reminded US officials of Ahmadinejad's boast only a couple of days ago about the forthcoming launch of an Iranian satellite into orbit. The two events clearly hang together as probably coordinated between Tehran and Pyongyang.

Ahead of the UN Security Council emergency session later Tuesday, Kim Jong Un's government warned of “stronger actions” after the nuclear test. Its diplomat warned the UN disarmament forum that his country will “never bow to any resolutions.”

The nuclear threat is not the only unconventional warfare peril looming closer. In Damascus, Syrian rebels are nearer than ever before to crashing through the capital's last lines of defense. Tuesday, they were only 1.5 kilometers short of the heart of Damascus.

Western and Israeli military sources believe that if the Syrian rebels reach this target, the Syrian ruler Bashar Assad will have no qualms about using chemical weapons for the first time in the two-year civil war to save his regime. Both the US and Israel have warned him that doing so would cross a red line.

debkafile's military sources report that Syrian rebel forces, spearheaded by an Al Qaeda-allied Islamist brigade, gained entry Tuesday to the 4th Division's (Republican Guard) main base in the Adra district of eastern Damascus and are fighting the defenders in hand to hand combat for control of the facility.

Other rebel forces are retaking parts of the Damascus ring road in fierce battles, thereby cutting off the Syrian army's Homs units in the north from their supply lines from the capital.

These two rebel thrusts, if completed, would bring the Syrian army closer than ever before to

collapse. Assad is therefore expected to use every means at his disposal to cut his enemies down.

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