

# Hours after Korea test, Iran calls for end to nukes

Tehran stops short of condemning ally North Korea for its defiant trial, defends 'nuclear activities for peaceful purposes'

By MICHAL SHMULOVICH and AP | February 12, 2013, 1:24 pm |

**I**ran called on Tuesday for all nuclear weapons in the world to be destroyed, hours after North Korea said it carried out a nuclear test in defiance of threats to further isolate the pariah state.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Ramin Mehmanparast told state news agency IRNA that the world needed to move beyond the use of mass-casualty weapons.

"We need to come to the point where no country has any nuclear weapons and at the same time all weapons of mass destruction and nuclear arms need to be destroyed," Mehmanparsat said.

Yet countries should have the right to "make use of nuclear activities for peaceful purposes," he added.

Iran and North Korea are seen as allies. In December, Iranian agents were reported on hand for a long-range missile test and the two countries maintain weapons technology sharing agreements.

Iran itself is accused of attempting to build a nuclear weapon, though it claims its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes.

Mehmanparsat confirmed Iran was converting some highly-enriched uranium to nuclear fuel. "This work is being done and all its reports have been sent to the International Atomic Energy Agency in a complete manner," Mehmanparast was quoted as saying by IRNA.

On Sunday, diplomats from the UN's nuclear watchdog claimed Iran was [resuming its conversion of small amounts of enriched uranium into nuclear fuel](#), signaling that Tehran was possibly trying to buy more time for diplomacy ahead of its nuclear talks with P5+1 group — comprising the UN Security Council members plus Germany — scheduled later this month in Kazakhstan.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that Tehran was continuing its [quest for an atomic bomb, is approaching the irreversible "red line"](#) and, if not stopped, would soon be able to

arm a nuclear warhead.

“It’s focused on enrichment because if they could continue and complete enrichment of highly enriched uranium then they’ll have enough to produce enough material to produce a nuclear bomb,” the premier told a delegation from the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

The Iranian statement came after North Korea conducted an underground nuclear test Tuesday, taking an important step toward building a bomb small enough to be fitted on a missile that could reach United States.

The move drew condemnations from the UN, US, France and NATO as well as Russia, which unequivocally condemned the testing of the miniaturized nuclear device, according to Russia Today.

The EU’s High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Catherine Ashton urged Pyongyang to refrain from further “provocative” actions.

Russian, Japanese, and top US diplomats discussed North Korea’s nuclear test over the phone Tuesday, Russia’s RIA Novosti reported, quoting its Foreign Ministry.

Earlier Tuesday, US President Barack Obama called the test a “highly provocative act” that threatens security and international peace.

“The danger posed by North Korea’s threatening activities warrants further swift and credible action by the international community,” Obama said in a statement issued early Tuesday. “The United States will also continue to take steps necessary to defend ourselves and our allies.”

North Korea’s official state media said the test was conducted in a safe manner and is aimed at coping with “outrageous” US hostility that “violently” undermines the North’s peaceful, sovereign right to launch satellites. North Korea faced sanctions after a December launch of a rocket that the UN and Washington called a cover for a banned missile test. Pyongyang said it was a peaceful satellite launch.

The North said it used a “lighter, miniaturized atomic bomb” that still has more explosive force than past tests. North Korea is estimated to have enough weaponized plutonium for four to eight bombs, according to American nuclear scientist Siegfried Hecker. However, it is not known whether North Korean scientists have found a way to miniaturize warheads.

The timing of the test will be seen as significant. The test came hours before Obama was scheduled to give his State of the Union speech, a major, nationally televised address. It’s also only days before the Saturday birthday of Kim Jong Un’s father, late leader Kim Jong Il, whose memory North Korean propaganda has repeatedly linked to the country’s nuclear ambitions. This

year also marks the 60th anniversary of the signing of the armistice that ended the 1950-53 Korean War.

Meanwhile, Mehmanparast also said that the [UN nuclear watchdog's demands to revisit a military site where Tehran is suspected of conducting nuclear-related experiments](#) are still on the table.

Inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency arrive in Tehran for talks Wednesday in hopes of restarting a probe into Iran's disputed nuclear program. "The discussion over visiting Parchin could be part of a deal" with IAEA inspectors, he said.

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