

# South Korea and U.S. Raise “Watchcon” Alert Status to “Vital Threat” before Expected North Korea Missile Test

By [Global Research News](#)

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*The North last week told foreign diplomats in Pyongyang they had until April 10 to consider evacuation, fuelling speculation of a launch between Wednesday and April 15 birthday celebrations for late founder Kim Il-Sung.*

It could also coincide with high-profile visits by US Secretary of State John Kerry and NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who will both be in Seoul on Friday.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-Se told parliament the launch could take place “anytime” and warned Pyongyang it risked triggering a fresh round of UN sanctions.

South Korean intelligence says the North has prepared two mid-range missiles for imminent launch from its east coast, despite warnings from ally China to avoid provocative moves at a time of soaring military tensions.

✖ On Tuesday the North reiterated a warning that the peninsula was headed for “thermonuclear” war and advised foreigners to consider leaving South Korea.

The South Korea-US Combined Forces Command raised its “Watchcon” status from 3 to 2 to reflect indications of a “vital threat”, Yonhap news agency said, citing a senior military official.

Watchcon 4 is in effect during normal peacetime, while Watchcon 3 reflects indications of an important threat. Watchcon 1 is used in wartime.

In a separate report, Yonhap quoted a government source as saying Pyongyang might be preparing “multiple” launches, after other launch vehicles were reportedly detected carrying shorter-range SCUD and Rodong missiles.

North Korea has completed fueling its “Musudan” medium-range ballistic missile, and is ready to launch it any moment, report Japanese media.

Earlier, Japanese military sources reported detecting up to seven mobile units mounted with various range ballistic missiles on the North Korean coast.

Meanwhile, the South Korean government has appealed to Russia and China to their influence with North Korea for defusing tensions on the Korean peninsula.

The South Korean Defence Ministry has said that several more missiles of shorter range, Scud and Nodong, are ready for launch in the same area in Kangwon Province.

Musudan missiles can reach Japan and the US Pacific island of Guam. The North Korean mass media have thus far failed to make any mention of a likely missile launch.

The media in North Korea is instead focused on preparations for the main national holiday, – Kim Il Sung’s birthday, that’s due to be widely celebrated on April 15th . Foreign Embassies and international organization offices continue working in Pyongyang as usual.

Up to seven mobile units with ballistic missiles of various range, from 300 km to over 3,000 km have been detected on the east coast of North Korea. They can be launched simultaneously or in succession over several days, starting from today, military sources said in Tokyo.

Besides the two mobile launchers with medium-range Musudan missiles detected on the east coast of the country, missile units have been moved to the coast of Hamgyong Province in the northeast of the country, with “Scud” ballistic missiles with a range of up to 500 km, and “Nodong” missiles with a 1.3 thousand kilometer range mounted on about five mobile launchers.

A key border crossing between North Korea and China been closed to tourist groups, a Chinese official said Wednesday as nuclear tensions mounted, but business travel was allowed to continue.

An official at the Dandong Border Office, who declined to give his name, told AFP: “Travel agencies are not allowed to take tourist groups to go there, since the North Korean government is now asking foreign people to leave. As far as I know, business people can enter and leave North Korea freely.”

Earlier, Pyongyang advised all foreigners to “consider leaving South Korea”, warning that the Korean peninsula was headed for “thermo-nuclear” war.

An AFP photographer at the border on Wednesday saw cars and a larger vehicle passing over the bridge crossing the Yalu River that marks the frontier, in both directions.

China is North Korea’s sole major ally and the provider of the vast majority of its trade and aid, with most of the business passing through Dandong.

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