

The Peanut - North Korea Tests a New Nuke - Continues to Press for Negotiations

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Earlier today North Korea [published pictures](#) of its leader Kim Jong Un admiring a thermonuclear device or H-bomb. Hours later it tested such a bomb in an underground explosion. The North Korean news agency [announced](#):

Pyongyang, September 3 (KCNA) — Respected Supreme Leader Kim Jong Un guided the work for nuclear weaponization on the spot. He was greeted by senior officials of the Department of Munitions Industry of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) and scientists of the Nuclear Weapons Institute before being briefed on the details of nuclear weaponization.

...

He watched an H-bomb to be loaded into new ICBM.

Saying that he felt the pride of indomitably bolstering up the nuclear forces at a great price while seeing the Juche-oriented thermonuclear weapon with super explosive power made by our own efforts and technology, he expressed great satisfaction over the fact that our scientists do anything without fail if the party is determined to do.

...

The H-bomb, the explosive power of which is adjustable from tens kiloton to hundreds kiloton, is a multi-functional thermonuclear nuke with great destructive power which can be detonated even at high altitudes for super-powerful EMP attack according to strategic goals.



The Walter Cronkite of North Korean TV, Ri Chun Hee, [showed more pictures from the visit](#) (vid) the visit and later announced the nuclear test.

[Some analyst](#) nicknamed the new device the Peanut. The bomb type obviously differs from the implosion type [Disco Ball](#) of March 2016. The “Juche orientation” component, which presumably guarantees the ideological conformity of the device, seems to be the round white box on the left.

(More seriously: Juche refers to self-sufficiency - i.e. North Korea made the components and built the device by itself.)

A graphic in one of the pictures [shows](#) the peanut within the warhead bay of a Hwasong-14 Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile.

An hour after the above release, earth-quake detection monitors in south Asia went off. A seismic event of 6.1 to 6.3 magnitude on the logarithmic [momentum magnitude scale](#) was detected in the area of Punggye-ri. Like earlier North Korean nuclear weapon tests in the same area, the event happened exactly on the half hour mark (at 12:00am local time). The magnitude points to a large device with an explosive power between 100 kilotons and 1 megaton TNT equivalent. (All previous North Korean nuclear tests were in the low kiloton range.) Some detection stations found another seismic event of 4.6 magnitude shortly thereafter. If confirmed it was likely caused by a “cave-in” of the sub-terrain test chamber. It will take some time to assess [the data](#) and to come to more precise estimates, but the qualitative different size of this test compared to previous ones is undeniable.

Added: A later statement by the North Korean news agency [confirmed](#) a successful test of a two-stage thermonuclear device. It claimed that no radiation was released to the atmosphere.

One must now assess that North Korea has the capability to make, launch and deliver staged thermonuclear weapons up to megaton size at ICBM ranges. Most of China, Japan and at least the U.S. west coast are in reach of such a weapon. With this warhead size

the somewhat dubious accuracy of North Korean missiles has much less relevance.

Before the U.S. and South Korea started this year's invasion maneuver Ulchi on August 22, North Korea had [warned](#) that it would test-launch four Hwasong-12 mid range ballistic missiles towards the large U.S. base on Guam if, and only if, the U.S. would continue to use "strategic equipment" around its borders. This referred to B-1B nuclear bombers and aircraft carriers.

The U.S. [understood](#) and [scaled back](#) the planned maneuver. No "strategic equipment" was used.

On August 28, when the maneuver had ended, North Korea [launched](#) a test of a single Hwasong-12 medium range missile into the Pacific. The missile crossed over Japan at a height of 550 kilometers. (It thereby did NOT violate Japanese air-space.) Earlier tests had been flown in unrealistic steep trajectories to avoid such an overflight. This test was likely designed to prove to the U.S. the capability to reach Guam.

On August 31 the U.S. [flew](#) another "show of force" with B-1B bombers and F-35 stealth fighter planes over South Korea. The planes trained precision bombing with live bombs at a South Korean training area. These plane types are "strategic equipment" and the training makes only sense in a "preemptive strike on North Korea" [scenario](#).

One can understand today's nuclear test as a response to these continuing U.S. provocations. The U.S. will of course claim that only North Korea is "provoking" here and it itself is only "responding". But such a hen-egg discussion and juvenile tit-for-tat is not only useless but dangerous. History tells us that the U.S. [completely devastated](#) North Korea and killed some 20% of its population, not vice versa. So far only North Korea had to fear nuclear destruction. That has now changed into a more balanced situation. A preventive or preemptive war on North Korea is [no longer an option](#).

Today's event should convince even the dumbest of the doubters that North Korea's claimed capabilities are real. It should also demonstrate to the White House that verbal "fire and fury" insults, tit-for-tat shows of force and further economic sanctioning of North Korea [and/or China](#) are, [as predicted](#), only worsening the situation.

Phillipe [notes](#) in the comments that today is the opening of a BRICS summit in Xiamen in China. Xi Jinping is giving a big speech. He will not like this disruption. China [strongly condemned](#) the test but there is little else it could reasonably do.

North Korea has offered several times to negotiate with the U.S. towards a peace agreement. (As the Korea War only ended in a ceasefire the nations are still at war.) It offered to stop all its nuclear and missile testing if the U.S. stops the large scale maneuvers in South Korea. Russia, China [and South Korea](#) have long urged the U.S. to pick up on that offer. The U.S. could have done so every day since the offer was first made years ago. Not doing so has only created the current situation and today's events.

On September 9 North Korea will celebrate [its](#) Independence Day. Such occasions are often used to demonstrate new capabilities. Today's first KCNA statement included the lines:

[Kim Jong Un] watched an H-bomb to be loaded into new ICBM

...

[which] can be detonated even at high altitudes for super-powerful EMP attack

A strong nuclear explosion at great height can cause an Electro-Magnetic-Pulse which does not directly kill people on the ground but creates some damage to unprotected electric and electronic equipment. The EMP threat is [largely exaggerated](#) but a hobby horse of many fear- and war-mongers in Congress. North Korea surely knows this and the statement thereby touches a sensible point. I find it unlikely that North Korea would go with such an unproven concept. This is mere trolling. But a September 9 ICBM missile test, on a realistic trajectory and with a simulated nuclear load, is definitely a possible next step to up the pressure towards new negotiations.

I for one feel no urge to witness a full Hwasong-14 ICBM test with even a dud megaton nuclear device on board. If the White House feels the same it must NOW stop further provocations and immediately agree to open-ended talks with North Korea.

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