

U.S. representative labels North Korea 'terrorist state'

Secretary of State Colin Powell assures that Bush seeks a peaceful solution to nuclear weapons disagreement

BY GEORGE GEDDA
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO — Secretary of State Colin Powell pressed North Korea on Sunday to return to nuclear disarmament talks even as he branded the communist country a "terrorist state" that has "no respect for human rights."

Powell's strong comments came after North Korea accused the United States of "evermore hostile acts," including U.S. participation in a multinational naval exercise set to begin Monday off the Japanese coast.

The maneuvers are part of an effort to curb the smuggling of missiles and nuclear technology on the high seas.

North Korea dominated Powell's discussions in Japan with Prime Minister Junichiro and other officials. Later, Powell flew to China where he planned talks on Monday with President Hu Jintao on North Korea, Taiwan and other issues.

Powell's final stop during his trip to East Asia will be South Korea.

At a news conference, Powell gave assurances that President Bush seeks a peaceful solution to the long-running impasse over North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.

The United States is seeking the permanent dismantling of these

programs. Three meetings involving the United States, the two Koreas, China, Japan and Russia have been held in China, with little evidence of progress.

Blaming what it said were hostile U.S. policies, North Korea boycotted a meeting that was to have been held in September. Powell said it was urgent to resume the talks.

Responding to North Korea's wariness about the naval exercises, Powell said, "The only thing North Korea should be concerned about is whether or not they're going to be caught in the act of participating in ... illicit traffic. This is not hostile to any nation that is acting in an appropriate manner."

In the past, North Korea has exported missiles to the Middle East.

The United States, Japan and seven other countries will participate in the naval exercise; some 14 more nations will serve as observers.

The U.S. undersecretary for arms control, John Bolton, will monitor the exercises on Tuesday. Long an outspoken critic of North Korea, he was once derided by officials there as "human scum."

North Korea says U.S. hostile intent also was reflected in a human rights law that was signed by President Bush last week.

The law urges North Korea to

allow freedom of speech and religion and calls for the appointment by the president of a human rights monitor for North Korea. In the absence of a reduction in rights abuses, the law would forbid U.S. assistance to North Korea except for humanitarian purposes.

Interviewed by Japanese journalists, Powell said the desperation of North Koreans is apparent by the number of them who jump over fences and penetrate embassy compounds "to get away from this regime that made life so difficult for them — not only economically difficult but by having no respect for human rights."

He also highlighted North Korea's role in kidnaping Japanese citizens and smuggling them into North Korea. "A state did this, not terrorists, but a state. A terrorist state did this," Powell said.

Powell's comments on North Korea were unusually harsh. The administration normally has refrained from such rhetoric as it has pursued renewed North Korean participation in the six-party talks.

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry has said direct U.S.-North Korea talks are the best way to reach a settlement. Powell said North Korea itself is "desperate" for that kind of negotiation.

"I think anybody who would approach the problem that way, after we have gotten the six-party framework moving forward, will be disappointed, whether it's Mr. Kerry or anybody else," Powell said.

Further quakes wreak havoc on Northern Japan

A magnitude 6.8 earthquake on Saturday was followed on Monday by a 5.6 aftershock 160 miles from Tokyo

BY ERIC TALMADGE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

OJIYA, Japan — Yoshikazu Ogawa stood outside the pile of rubble that was once his home, poking around the plaster and wood that had suddenly come crashing down on his two minivans when a series of earthquakes hit northern Japan, killing at least 23 people and injuring some 2,000.

"We've got nothing," he said Sunday, one day after a magnitude 6.8 quake flattened his home and neighborhood in Ojiya, a town of 40,000 about 160 miles northwest of Tokyo. "Our house is destroyed. We have no electricity, no toilet, no telephone."

Like some 64,000 other people, Ogawa said he and his family planned to spend the night in one of hundreds of makeshift evacuation centers — school gymnasiums, parking lots, even street corners — set up in the region as officials struggle to restore its battered lifelines.

Early Monday, a 5.6-magnitude aftershock hit the region, jolting survivors huddled in emergency shelters. It hit near Ojiya, the epicenter of Saturday's temblor. No damage or injuries were immediately reported.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi pledged that the government would set aside funding for reconstruction. But officials estimated it would take

weeks to rebuild roads, bridges and homes and restore essential services.

The quake hit just after sunset Saturday in Niigata state on the northwestern coast of Japan's main island.

Several strong quakes followed through the night as a near-total blackout enveloped about 280,000 households and aftershocks continued jolting the area Sunday.

The Japanese government said 23 people were killed and 1,232 were injured. Public broadcaster NHK reported that some 2,000 people were injured.

The injured overwhelmed local hospitals, where patients were being treated in the hallways. Saturday's quake also flattened dozens of homes, tore through the pavement of local roads and highways and caused landslides that left whole villages cut off from the outside world.

Two trains derailed, but no injuries were reported. One was a bullet train, the first to jump its tracks since Japan began running such trains in 1964.

Military helicopters airlifted stranded villagers from a riverside hamlet, Shiotani, that was cut off when the bridge connecting it to Ojiya was toppled. Several other villages were isolated, including Yamagoshi, a mountain village of 600, where a landslide

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