

# U.S. deploys more Patriot missiles in South Korea

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — The United States temporarily deployed an additional Patriot missile battery in South Korea in response to North Korea's nuclear test and a long-range rocket launch, ahead of talks next week to set up an even more sophisticated U.S. missile defense in a move that has worried China and Russia.

The new tough stance follows South Korea's decision to shut down an inter-Korean factory park that had been the rival Koreas' last major symbol of cooperation, but that Seoul said had been used by North Korea to fund its nuclear and missile programs. North Korea responded by deporting South Korean citizens, seizing South Korean assets and vowing to militarize the park.

South Korea on Friday cut off power and water supplies to the industrial park and announced that its planned talks with the United States on deploying the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, one of the most advanced missile defense systems in the world, could start next week. Officials say they have yet to set a specific starting date for the talks.

In the meantime, the U.S. military command in South Korea said Saturday that an air defense battery unit from Ft. Bliss, Texas, has been conducting ballistic missile training using the Patriot system at Osan Air Base near Seoul.

Lt. Gen. Thomas Vandal, commander of the U.S. Eighth Army, said "exercises like this ensure we are always ready to defend against an attack from North Korea."

"North Korea's continued development of ballistic missiles against the expressed will of the international community requires

the alliance to maintain effective and ready ballistic missile defenses," he said in a statement.

A spokeswoman for U.S. Forces Korea couldn't confirm how long the Patriot missile battery from Texas would be deployed in South Korea. The U.S. military already has an operating Patriot missile defense system in South Korea to counter the threat of North Korea's shorter-range arsenal and medium-range missiles.

South Korean media have long speculated that the two countries are working on a THAAD deployment in South Korea, but it took the North's rocket launch last Sunday, which outsiders see as a test of banned ballistic missile technology, for the allies to formally announce they will begin the missile defense talks.

Beijing and Moscow are sensitive to the possibility of THAAD in South Korea; critics say the system could help U.S. radar spot missiles in other countries.

China's state media quickly made the country's displeasure known, while Russia also expressed worries about the deployment. North Korea has previously warned of a nuclear war in the region and threatened to bolster its armed forces if the THAAD deployment occurs.

In Munich, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with his Chinese and South Korean counterparts to discuss the response to North Korea's actions, including the missile system. In talks with South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, Kerry expressed support for Seoul's decision to shut down the factory park in the North Korean border town of Kaesong and discussed a broad range of potential sanctions against the North, South Korea's Foreign Ministry said.



## Declaration of unity

Pope Francis, left, head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill, center, and Cuba's President Raul Castro stand together during a document signing ceremony at Jose Marti airport in Havana, Cuba on Friday. Francis and Kirill signed a joint declaration on religious unity. The declaration calls for peace in Syria, Iraq and Ukraine and urges Europe to "maintain its faithfulness to its Christian roots." Alejandro Ernesto/AP photo

# Diplomats aim for temporary Syria truce in a week

BEIRUT (AP) — A diplomatic push for a temporary pause in Syria's civil war and the delivery of humanitarian aid faced huge hurdles Friday, with Russia saying it would continue its airstrikes and government planes dropping leaflets urging rebels to surrender because "the belt is narrowing around you."

A plan for the "cessation in violence" announced by the U.S. and Russia does not go into effect for a week, and while the Syrian opposition expressed "cautious optimism," it also said more innocent civilians would be killed in that span.

Government forces, aided by a withering Russian bombing campaign, are trying to encircle rebels in Syria's largest city of Aleppo and cut off their supply route to Turkey. Another week of fighting could bring the Syrian troops closer to that goal.

Syrian forces recaptured several strategic hills north of Aleppo and are in position to target the final supply line to the rebel-held eastern suburbs, according to Al-Manar TV, a Lebanese channel run by the militant group and Syrian ally Hezbollah.

Heavy fighting between



Nicholas Kamm/Pool Photo via AP. File Secretary of State John Kerry at a conference entitled 'Supporting Syria & The Region,' in London.

government and opposition forces occurred south of Aleppo, around the town of Tamoura, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. It said 12 fighters of the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front were killed.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry praised the agreement in Munich as a significant accomplishment in the five-year war, but he noted that a cessation of hostilities, if achieved, would only be a "pause" in the fighting and that more work would be needed to turn it into a full-fledged cease-fire.

He also said the agreements made were "commitments on paper" only. "The real test is whether

or not all the parties honor those commitments and implement them," he told reporters after the nearly six-hour meeting concluded early Friday.

Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said a task force must try to deal with the "modalities" of the temporary truce. The task force will include members of the military along with representatives from countries that are supporting various armed groups in Syria. The Syrian government and the opposition would both have to agree to the details.

That could pave the way for a new round of peace talks between President Bashar Assad's government and the opposition, scheduled for Feb. 25 in Geneva. An earlier session broke down last week, due largely to gains by Assad's military helped by the Russian airstrikes.

The deal appeared to be the result of a compromise between the United States, which had wanted an immediate cease-fire, and Russia, which had proposed one to start on March 1.

Lavrov made clear that Moscow will continue airstrikes on Aleppo and other parts of Syria because

they are targeting groups that are not eligible for the "temporary cessation of hostilities."

In the Syrian capital of Damascus, a member of Assad's ruling Baath Party told The Associated Press that the army's operations will continue against the Islamic State groups, the Nusra Front, and other factions that are close to them.

Parliament member Sharif Shehadeh said "the army aims to regain all Syrian territories and any part of Syria is a target for the army."

Syrian aircraft dropped leaflets over parts of Aleppo province telling militants to "drop your arms or this will be your fate." They bore a photo of the nearly naked, bullet-riddled body of a fighter and a Kalashnikov assault rifle by his side.

"The belt is narrowing around you more and more. Go back to where you came from. Surrender or you will face you inevitable fate," the leaflet read.

Kerry and Lavrov also announced an agreement to "accelerate and expand" deliveries of humanitarian aid to besieged Syrian communities beginning this week.



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