

N. Korea to suspend nuclear, missile testing

By KIM TONG-HYUNG
Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea said Saturday it has suspended nuclear and long-range missile tests and plans to close its nuclear test site ahead of a new round of negotiations with South Korea and the United States. There was no clear indication in the North's announcement if it would be willing to deal away its arsenal.

The North rather expressed confidence about its nuclear force, which leader Kim Jong Un declared as complete in November after a slew of weapons tests that included the underground detonation of a purported thermonuclear warhead and flight tests of three intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Some analysts believe Kim is entering the negotiations from a position of strength and is unlikely to accept a significant cut of his arsenal or go significantly beyond freezing a nuclear program. South Korean and U.S. officials have said Kim is likely trying to save his broken economy from heavy sanctions.

After the announcement Saturday about testing, President Donald Trump tweeted, "This is



AP Photo/Ahn Young-joon
People watch the news at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, Saturday. North Korea said it has suspended nuclear and long-range missile tests and plans to close its nuclear test site.

very good news for North Korea and the World" and "big progress!"

He also said he's looking forward to his upcoming summit with Kim.

South Korea's presidential office welcomed North Korea's announcement as "meaningful progress" toward the denuclearization of the peninsula. Presidential official Yoon Young-chan said in a statement that the North's decision brightens the prospects for successful talks between Seoul,

Pyongyang and Washington.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency said the country is making the move to shift its national focus and improve its economy.

The North also vowed to actively engage with regional neighbors and the international community to secure peace on the peninsula and create an "optimal international environment" to build its economy.

The announcement came days

before Kim is set to meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in in a border truce village for a rare summit aimed at resolving the nuclear standoff with Pyongyang.

A separate meeting between Kim and Trump is anticipated in May or June.

The North's decisions were made in a meeting of the ruling party's full Central Committee, which had convened to discuss a "new stage" of policies. The Korean Workers' Party Central Committee declared a "great victory" in the country's official "byungjin" policy of simultaneously pursuing economic and nuclear development.

The committee unanimously adopted a resolution that called for concentrating national efforts to achieve a strong socialist economy and "groundbreaking improvements in people's lives."

"To secure transparency on the suspension of nuclear tests, we will close the republic's northern nuclear test site," the party's resolution said.

The official news agency quoted Kim as saying during the meeting: "Nuclear development has proceeded scientifically and in due order and the development of the delivery strike means also

proceeded scientifically and verified the completion of nuclear weapons.

"We no longer need any nuclear test or test launches of intermediate and intercontinental range ballistic missiles and because of this, the northern nuclear test site has finished its mission."

Seoul says Kim has expressed genuine interest in dealing away his nuclear weapons. But North Korea for decades has been pushing a concept of "denuclearization" that bears no resemblance to the American definition, vowing to pursue nuclear development unless Washington removes its troops from the peninsula.

South Korean scientists have questioned whether the North could continue conducting underground nuclear detonations at its mountainous test site in Kilju in the northeast due to a series of earthquakes that were likely triggered by the activity, suggesting it's too unstable for further bomb tests.

At the height of Pyongyang's standoff with Washington and Seoul last year, North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho told reporters the country could conduct an atmospheric hydrogen bomb test over the Pacific Ocean.

In court, Dems allege conspiracy between Trump camp, Russia

NEW YORK (AP) — The Democratic Party sued Donald Trump's presidential campaign, Russia, WikiLeaks and Trump's son and son-in-law Friday, accusing them of an intricate conspiracy to undercut Democrats in the 2016 election by stealing tens of thousands of emails and documents.

The lawsuit filed in Manhattan federal court seeks unspecified damages and an order to prevent further interference with computer systems of the Democratic National Committee.

"During the 2016 presidential campaign, Russia launched an all-out assault on our democracy, and it found a willing and active partner in Donald Trump's

campaign," DNC Chairman Tom Perez said in a statement. He called it an "act of unprecedented treachery."

The Democrats accuse Trump and his associates of trading on pre-existing relationships with Russian oligarchs tied to President Vladimir Putin and of collaborating with Russia as it worked to undermine Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton.

The president has said repeatedly there was no collusion between his campaign and Russia. On Friday, his campaign scorned the lawsuit as "frivolous" and predicted it would be quickly dismissed.

"This is a sham lawsuit about a bogus Russian collusion claim

filed by a desperate, dysfunctional and nearly insolvent Democratic Party," Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale said in a statement.

He said the campaign would seek to turn the tables on the Democrats, using the legal discovery process to try to pry documents from the DNC including any related to a dossier detailing allegations of links between Trump and Russia. The dossier — a collection of memos — was written by an ex-British spy whose work was funded by Clinton and the DNC.

Trump himself tweeted that the DNC lawsuit could be "very good news," saying his campaign "will now counter for the DNC Server that they refused to give to the FBI" as well as Hillary Clinton's emails.

Russia: U.S. did not violate red lines during Syria strikes

MOSCOW (AP) — Russia's foreign minister said Friday that the U.S. sought out and respected Moscow's positions in Syria when it launched its air strikes last week.

Lavrov noted that despite the escalating tensions between Moscow and Washington, the U.S. made sure it didn't harm any Russian personnel and positions during the strikes against the regime of President Bashar Assad following a suspected chemical attack on the town of Douma.

"We told them where our red lines were, including the geographical red lines," Lavrov told Russian state television. "The results have shown that they haven't crossed those lines."

Moscow had warned the U.S. before the strike that it could hit back if the U.S. actions jeopardize Russian servicemen in Syria, and the

allies had given Russia an advance warning to make sure no Russians were in the line of fire.

Lavrov also revealed that Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin discussed the possibility of visiting each other's country when the U.S. president rang his Russian counterpart last month to congratulate him on his re-election.

Lavrov that Trump indicated he could make a reciprocal trip to Russia if Putin were able to accept his invitation to the White House.

Previously, both the White House and the Kremlin had only revealed that Trump had invited Putin to the White House during the same call on March 20.

Lavrov says the Trump administration hasn't followed up on the offer and Russia has urged the U.S. to discuss specifics about such a meeting.

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