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# North Korea Admits to Possessing Nuclear Weapons

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North Korea says it will not return to multilateral talks on ending its nuclear ambitions and has repeated its earlier assertions that it has already manufactured nuclear weapons. South Korean, Japanese and U.S. officials are pushing Pyongyang to resume talks.

A North Korean television announcer reads a Foreign Ministry statement Thursday, saying that Pyongyang is suspending participation in multilateral nuclear talks for "an indefinite period."

He then says North Korea has manufactured nuclear weapons, repeating earlier claims.

The statement also says that U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's recent description of the North is an "outpost of tyranny" shows that Washington has a hostile attitude toward North Korea. Pyongyang says that means it has no justification to continue the talks.

Speaking in Luxembourg, Ms. Rice said the decision would only "deepen North Korea's isolation." She says the international community has been clear there is no need for nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula, and that the United States has no intention of attacking the North.

For months, North Korea has stalled efforts to have a fourth round of talks with China, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States. Many experts on North Korea thought Pyongyang delayed in part because it hoped that President Bush would be defeated in last year's election. After Mr. Bush was re-elected, Pyongyang indicated it would decide on resuming talks after the president selected his new foreign policy team.

Mr. Bush last week gave only a low-key mention to North Korea in his annual State of the Union address, giving some experts hope that Pyongyang would return to the table. And in recent weeks, U.S. and South Korean officials had expressed optimism about the talks.

Chun Youk, a spokeswoman for the conservative Grand National Party in South Korea, says her party is disappointed in North Korea's decision.

Ms. Chun says North Korean leader Kim Jong Il has made a choice to protect his regime, rather than negotiate in the interest of his people.

Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi said he will continue to urge North Korea to return to the six-party talks, despite the latest announcement.

North Korea has said publicly in the past it possesses nuclear weapons, and U.S. experts have said it may have built one or two crude devices, and has the fuel to build about eight more. However, North Korea has not yet conducted a nuclear test.

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Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice says North Korea is only deepening its international isolation by suspending its role in six-party talks on its nuclear program. Ms. Rice, in Luxembourg for talks with European Union officials, called the move "unfortunate," and said Pyongyang should reconsider. Ms. Rice responded to the North Korean statement in Luxembourg, as she finished her first overseas trip as secretary of state, calling the announcement from Pyongyang ...

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A U.S. newspaper reports that Washington is asking China to pressure North Korea on its alleged nuclear weapons program. A story in Wednesday's New York Times says two members of President Bush's National Security Council recently met with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Beijing. The report says the officials discussed new evidence that Pyongyang may have sold to Libya a form of uranium used in nuclear weapons. The Times quotes Asian...