

# **Japan warns North Korea now has miniaturized nukes small enough to fit on its ballistic missiles and is a ‘serious and imminent threat’**

North Korea has miniaturized nuclear warheads and made them small enough to fit on ballistic missiles, Japan believes.

Tokyo defense chiefs warn in a new white paper that North Korea’s military activities pose a ‘serious and imminent threat’.

In last year’s report, Japan said it was ‘possible’ that North Korea had achieved miniaturization, but Tokyo now appears to have upgraded its assessment, according to Japanese newspaper Yomiuri.

Japan is seen as a ‘primary target’ of nearby North Korea’s weapons capabilities and fears that Pyongyang’s nuclear program is ‘growing unabated’, experts say.

The latest findings come alongside newly-released pictures which suggest a North Korean plant may be leaking hazardous waste into a nearby river.



North Korea has miniaturized nuclear warheads and made them small enough to fit on ballistic missiles, Japan believes (pictured, a recent North Korean weapons test)

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North Korean strongman Kim Jong-un shakes hands U.S. President Donald Trump in an impromptu meeting in late June. Diplomacy has stalled again since then

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The Japanese report highlights the lack of progress on denuclearisation talks, said Vipin Narang, a nuclear affairs expert at MIT.

‘It is Japan that is most threatened, and probably the primary target of such a capability,’ he said.

‘So openly acknowledging it underscores Tokyo’s acute fears that North Korea’s nuclear program continues to grow unabated with no foreseeable plan to slow its growth, let alone eliminate them.’

The report is due to be approved at a Cabinet meeting in Japan in mid-September.

In last year’s Defense White Paper, Japan said ‘miniaturizing a nuclear weapon small enough to be mounted on a ballistic missile requires a considerably high degree of technological capacity’.

However, they said ‘it is possible that North Korea has achieved the miniaturization of nuclear weapons and has developed nuclear warheads.’

Japan's latest findings are similar to those of its allies, America and South Korea.

The South said in a 2018 defense paper that North Korea's ability to miniaturize nuclear weapons 'appears to have reached a considerable level.'

American officials have concluded for years that North Korea had likely produced miniaturized nuclear warheads.

South Korean intelligence bosses believe that the North continued to miniaturize nuclear warheads even after the Singapore summit between Trump and Kim in June 2018, according to Korean media.

At that time, North Korea committed 'to work toward complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula' and destroyed some tunnels and buildings at its Punggye-ri nuclear test site.

However, a second Trump-Kim meeting in February collapsed without an agreement, and North Korea has since resumed missile tests amid angry exchanges of rhetoric between the two countries.

Hopes for a breakthrough were revived when Trump and Kim shook hands in an impromptu meeting in the border zone on June 30.

At that meeting, Trump became the first sitting U.S. President to step over the border into North Korean territory.

But matters have since worsened again amid a row over military drills in South Korea.

There are close to 30,000 US troops stationed in South Korea and their annual drills with tens of thousands of South Korean soldiers have always infuriated the North.

Washington has insisted on complete denuclearisation as a condition for lifting punishing U.S. sanctions.

Stephen Biegun, the U.S. envoy on North Korea, was in Seoul this week to meet with South Korean officials, and said he was prepared to engage with North Korea 'as soon as we hear from our counterparts.'

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Source:

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