

North Korea threatened by western powers

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John Boyman, a member of Workers Power USA, argues that the permanent threat against North Korea by the US imperialists are at root the cause of the current crisis

Tensions throughout Asia ? particularly on the Korean Peninsula ? have dramatically escalated in the past several days. The eyes of the world now turn hesitantly away from developments in Central Asia and the Middle East towards the rapidly deteriorating situation manifesting between the contentious powers of US imperialism and North Korea. The potential for the renewal of fighting and, with it, the makings of a new arms race between North and South Korea, China, and Japan, could send this historically volatile region of the world to a breaking point.

The current flaring of hostilities began April 2009 when the United States and Japan pushed for sanctions against the North Korean regime following what they dubbed, ?a cover for a long-range missile test.? Speaking in Prague during his European visit, Obama denounced North Korea for renewing its weapons program and, thus, aggravating the deep-seated animosity held between North Korea and its neighbors. "North Korea broke the rules, once again, by testing a rocket that could be used for long-range missiles... this provocation underscores the need for action - not just this afternoon at the UN Security Council, but in our determination to prevent the spread of these weapons...violations must be punished.?1

Russia and China, North Korea's main trading partners, urged the UN to show restraint with regard to imposing greater rounds of sanctions on the already impoverished country still reeling from the effects of UN Security Council Resolution 1718 (sanctions passed after North Korea's initial nuclear weapons test in October of 2006.) A spokesman from China's Foreign Ministry said, ?we hope related parties stay calm and exercise restraint, appropriately deal with it and together maintain peace and stability in this region.?2

On April 13th, the UN Security Council agreed unanimously to a ?Presidential Statement? that openly condemned the rocket launch and pushed for the expansion of already existing sanction agreements. The New York Times reported that in response to these actions, the North Korean Foreign Ministry issued a statement condemning the vote of the UN Security Council to expand sanctions and vowed to never again return to the ?six-party talks.? ?There is no need for the six-party talks anymore...[w]e will never again take part in such talks and will not be bound by any agreement reached at the talks.?3

The next day, International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors were told that their services were no longer necessary at the Yongbyon nuclear facility. According to the statement, inspectors will no longer be granted access to the facility and were asked to leave the country as soon as possible.

In retaliation for the denunciation and the threat of expanded sanctions, North Korean officials threatened another nuclear detonation if the UN did not formally apologize for the resolution which they deemed ?an insult? to the North Korean people. No apology came and, as a result, this past week North Korea made good on its promise to detonate a nuclear device in defiance of the UN Security Council.

Condemnation echoed from all corners of the world ? even from historical allies like China and Russia. The South Korean government, in response, promptly joined the US-sponsored ?Proliferation Security Initiative? (PSI) which allows for sea-faring vessels to be searched under the pretext that they can potentially harbor nuclear warheads. This caused uproar in the upper echelons of power in North Korea. The inclusion of South Korea in the PSI was, according to the North Korean regime, tantamount to a declaration of war.

By the end of May, North Korean officials formally declared that they were no longer bound by the agreements laid out in the 1953 armistice that ?ended? the war on the Korean Peninsula. Officials overtly stated that if South Korean or American forces stopped and searched any North Korean vessel, then North Korea would respond to defend itself. A spokesman for the North Korean Army said ?Any hostile act against our peaceful vessels, including search and seizure, will be considered an unpardonable infringement on our sovereignty."4

The imperialist armies of the United States and its ally in the region ? Japan ? are formally gearing up for a possible confrontation with North Korea. It was reported that at the end of May, 12 F-22 fighter jets landed at a US Army base on the island of Okinawa ? just south of mainland Japan.

Japanese Prime Minister, Taro Aso, even recently announced that he is looking for a way to get around the specific language of the Japanese constitution that bars its army from conducting offensive operations in order to launch a pre-emptive attack on North Korea.

But these are the kind of actions that drive North Korea to expand their stockpiles of nuclear warheads. The ruling Stalinist clique knows full well that the only thing keeping the imperialists at bay is their potential threat that the US will be faced with a formidable nuclear arsenal. That is why they are developing these weapons: it is for their own self-preservation.

The US imperialists, on the other hand, would enjoy nothing more than to rid the world of the North Korean regime, and finally reopen that country up to capital investment - all in the name of more profits. That is why North Korea was labeled part of the Axis of Evil by the previous US administration. Therefore, they are playing up the ?dangers? of a nuclear North Korea in order to justify, 1) their economic and military aid to Japan, and 2) the necessity of maintaining 28,000 troops in South Korea and all the other US Military bases throughout the Pacific Rim. The breaking up of the post-capitalist, albeit bureaucratically planned, property relations in North Korea is what the United States desires above anything else.

The calls from the UN Security Council for North Korea to abandon its nuclear program are entirely hypocritical. After all, all these countries, particularly the United States, are allowed to have stockpiles of nuclear weapons. But who granted them that right? Clearly ?might? makes right ? if you are in the nuclear club you can keep your weapons, threatening anyone you do not like with them (like Rumsfeld?s low-grade nuclear Bunker Busters in Iraq)

The imperialist powers can have as many nuclear weapons as they desire. Why? Because their unquestioned military power makes it otherwise impossible for the majority of nations on the planet to prevent them from doing so.

But the moment a country like North Korea or a semi-colonial country (for instance Iran) tries to develop nuclear weapons for their own for protection, the entire imperialist world order goes into a frenzy. And they must: for their whole system is based on the subordination of the workers and peasants of the majority of the world to the rule of finance capital ? to their multi-nationals and investment banks. If one country is allowed to ?get out,? then others will one day wish to do the same. This ?domino-effect? is precisely what

the United States fears will happen if it doesn't act as the world policeman in the interests of super-exploitation and plunder.

The North Koreans must be afforded the right to develop nuclear weapons if they feel the need to do so to resist imperialist aggression. The consequences of the re-introduction of capitalism on the workers and peasants of North Korea would be nothing short of catastrophic. As socialists we are for the defeat of US and Japanese imperialism and the defense of the planned-property relations.

We reject any attempt at regime change by the imperialists. However, we are not blind to the horrors of the regime. The Stalinist dictators in North Korea preside over a monstrous bureaucratic regime, one that oppresses its largely peasant population. The League for the Fifth International is committed to building a revolutionary party in North Korea to overthrow the regime and replace it with genuine workers and peasants power ? a struggle for political revolution.

In the event of invasion by either singular or combined force of imperial powers against North Korea, we demand that the North Korean government set the workers and peasants into motion to defend themselves against imperialist slaughter. The workers and peasants have the right to arm themselves and organize their own methods of resistance against potential invaders. This will form an important counter-weight to the state controlled army and secret police.

At the same time, the United States must remove all troops from South Korea and close every single military base it has erected in Asia since the end of the Second World War. These forces only serve to perpetuate the hegemonic power US imperialism wields over the workers and peasants of Asia.

Footnotes

1 Paul Wolfson, ?Obama Condemns North Korea Launch, Calls for Nuclear Free World,? <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-04-05-voa12.cfm> ^[1] (accessed on May 30, 2009).

2 Reuters, ?China urges calm after North Korea rocket launch,? <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSPEK85579> ^[2] (accessed May 30th, 2009).

3 Mark Landler, ?North Korea Says It Will Halt Talks and Restart Its Nuclear Program,? <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/15/world/asia/15korea.html?ref=global-home> ^[3] (accessed May 30th, 2009).

4 BBC, ?N Korea threatens military action,? <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8069457.stm> ^[4] (accessed May 30th, 2009).

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Links:

[1] <http://www.voanews.com/english/2009-04-05-voa12.cfm>

[2] <http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSPEK85579>

[3] <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/15/world/asia/15korea.html?ref=global-home>

[4] <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8069457.stm>