

'North Korea has plutonium to make 10 nuclear bombs', claims South Korea

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Seoul: A week after North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un said it was close to test-launching an intercontinental ballistic missile, South Korea on Wednesday claimed that North Korea has enough plutonium to make 10 nuclear bombs.

Seoul, for the first time, directly highlighted the potential danger posed by North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM) and submarine-launched ballistic missiles

North Korea, which has carried out five nuclear tests and numerous missile launches, is thought to be planning a nuclear push in 2017 as it seeks to develop a weapon system that can hit the US mainland.

Seoul's defence ministry said that the North is believed to have some 50 kg (110 pounds) weapons-grade plutonium as of the end of 2016 "enough to make about 10 weapons" up from 40 kg eight years earlier.

It also said that North Korea has a considerable ability to produce weapons based on highly-enriched uranium, but did not estimate weapons-grade uranium stocks.

On the other hand, US think tank Institute for Science and International Security estimated in June that the North's total nuclear arsenal was more than 21 bombs, up from 10-16 in 2014, based on estimates of plutonium and uranium.

The United Nations Security Council adopted two resolutions against the North last year, following an unprecedented pair of nuclear tests and multiple rocket and missile launches.

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