

Bomb tests trigger North Korea nuclear site collapse

Sky News, 26 April 2018

Geologists believe an explosion with a yield estimated at 100 kilotons of TNT may have triggered an "earthquake swarm" over weeks.



A satellite image of what is believed to be North Korea's nuclear test sight

Chinese geologists say North Korea's main nuclear testing site has collapsed under the stress of five successive bomb tests.

A mountain above the notorious facility has collapsed, a study found, rendering it unsafe for future testing and presenting a serious risk of radiation leaking.

The paper's authors, Tian Dongdong, Yao Jiawen and Wen Lianxing, urged that authorities "continue to monitor any leakage of radioactive materials" in view of the "research finding that the North Korea nuclear test site at Mantapsan has collapsed". The findings follow an announcement by President Kim Jong Un **that North Korea would cease activity** on its weapons testing programme.

The commitment to close the facility, made on Saturday, was welcomed by Donald Trump as "big progress", but Pyongyang has not suggested it will give up its nuclear ambitions entirely.



Mr Kim announced that nuclear testing at the site would cease

It also comes days before a historic summit between North and South Korea, where they are set to discuss the nuclear ambitions of North Korea.

The secretive state has taken what appear to be historic and unusual steps toward conciliation in recent weeks, telling the US directly that it is prepared to discuss denuclearisation.

The peer-reviewed study carrying news of the collapse is by China's university of science and technology, and collected data after North Korea carried out its most powerful bomb test to date on 3 September.

Such attempts have long been believed to have put the site at risk of collapse.

Geologists believe the explosion, with a yield estimated at 100 kilotons of TNT, may have triggered an initial collapse toward the test centre followed by an "earthquake swarm" over several weeks.



The volcanic Mount Paektu could be at risk

North Korean nuclear tests have been a cause for seismic concern in China before. The test site is less than 100km from the Chinese border and past radiation fears have prompted schools and offices to be evacuated.

Kune Yull Suh, a nuclear engineering professor at Seoul National University, has warned further tests could threaten volcanic eruption at Mount Paektu, on the North Korea-China border.