

# Putin Says Korea Conflict Would Be Worse Than Chernobyl

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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North Korean military dogs attacking a mock target of South Korean Defense Minister Kim Kwan-jin on Saturday.

HANOVER, Germany — President Vladimir Putin expressed concern Monday about the escalating tensions on the Korean Peninsula and said conflict there could cause greater devastation than the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986.

"I would make no secret about it; we are worried about the escalation on the Korean Peninsula, because we are neighbors," Putin told a joint news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel during a visit to a trade fair in Germany.

"And if, God forbid, something happens, Chernobyl, which we all know a lot about, may seem like a child's fairy tale. Is there such a threat or not? I think there is," he said.

Chernobyl in Ukraine was the site of the worst nuclear power disaster in history in April 1986

when one of its reactors exploded during a safety experiment, sending out a plume of highly radioactive fallout.

Large areas of Ukraine, neighboring Belarus and Russia were contaminated. Radioactive dust also spread across parts of western Europe.

Putin, whose vast country shares a border with North Korea, urged all protagonists in the Korean crisis to act calmly and to support a diplomatic solution of "problems that have piled up for many years."

The Russian leader praised a U.S. decision over the weekend to postpone a planned missile test as part of efforts to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

"I think we should all thank the U.S. leadership for this step," Putin said. "I hope it will be noticed by our North Korean partners that certain conclusions will be drawn, everyone will calm down and start joint work to ease the situation."

Merkel told the same news conference that North Korea should halt its "provocations."

Speculation has been mounting that North Korea will launch some sort of provocative action in the coming days — an arms test or a missile launch — after weeks of bellicose threats against the South and the United States.

The prospect of another test has further boosted tensions, already driven up by Pyongyang's fury over the imposition of new U.S. sanctions after its last nuclear test in February. Earlier on Monday, South Korea rebuffed suggestions that a North Korean nuclear arms test may be imminent.

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