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Press Conference

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PRESS CONFERENCE ON SITUATION IN KOREAN PENINSULA

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea again firmly rejected today charges that it was responsible for the 26 March sinking of the warship *Cheonan*, as Sin Son Ho, its Permanent Representative to the United Nations, warned that his country would respond militarily to any Security Council condemnation over the sinking of the Republic of Korea vessel, which Seoul blamed on Pyongyang.

Mr. Sin, at a Headquarters press conference, instead cast doubts on the credibility of the Republic of Korea-organized international Joint Investigation Group, branding its findings "a complete fabrication from A to Z". Declaring that he wished to "further clarify" his country's position on the sinking of the *Cheonan*, he said the Group's findings were neither scientific nor objective, as claimed by both the Republic of Korea and the United States, adding that the material evidence they had presented raised many doubts even inside the Republic of Korea, the United States and around the world.

The attribution of responsibility for the sinking to his country was a farce concocted by the United States and the Republic of Korea for political purposes, he said. "It is the [United States] that mostly benefited from the incident of the sinking of the *Cheonan*," he charged, claiming that soon after the incident, the United States had "hyped" the threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, finally making the Democratic Party of Japan yield in its aim to drive United States forces out of Okinawa. He said the sinking had also helped the United States project a strong image before Congressional midterm elections later this year, and thus to justify its policy of "strategic patience", designed to degrade the environment for international investment in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and thereby suffocate its economy.

Mr. Sin said his country had instead proposed to dispatch its own investigative group to the site of the incident as the only way to get to the truth. "Only when all doubts are cleared and all truths are found evidently, can the case of the sinking of the *Cheonan* be resolved," he stressed, adding: "If the South Korean authorities have nothing to hide, there is no reason for them not to accept our inspection group for the verification of their 'investigation result'."

Urging caution on the part of the Security Council, he warned that if it formally debated the issue on the basis of Seoul's unilateral "investigation result" but without verification by his country, it would mean that the Council was taking the side of one party to the exclusion of the other.

Claiming that his country was the victim, he said such action by the Security Council would be contrary to the principles of sovereignty and equality, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and warned that war could break out anytime on the Korean peninsula due to the "reckless military manoeuvres of South Korea for retaliation and punishment after the fabrication of the 'investigation result'".

Recalling the past, Mr. Son said: "The Security Council has already been besmirched in February 2003 due to the then [United States] Secretary of State Colin Powell's lies about Iraq. If the Security Council is again deceived by another lie and tackles this case unfairly, thus failing to prevent any conflict on the Korean peninsula, the [United States] and the Security Council shall bear the full responsibility for the subsequent consequences arising therefrom." The people and army of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would "smash our aggressors" mercilessly if provoked, despite the country's oft-repeated desire to build a thriving and unified nation on the Korean peninsula, he

added.

In response to questions, Mr. Sin repeatedly reaffirmed his country's insistence on sending its own team to carry out investigations, asserting that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea considered that a priority at present.

Asked whether his country would also consider using nuclear weapons in reaction to any negative Security Council action, he said nuclear weapons were a "deterrent" and their use would be considered in respect of the present matter.

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