

North Korea fires three missiles into sea, claims Seoul

19/07/2016 22:14 by admin

Seoul: North Korea today launched three ballistic missiles into the sea off its east coast, apparently protesting South Korea's decision to allow the deployment of an advanced US missile defense system in the country.

According to Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff, the missiles launched from a western North Korea town flew across the country before crashing into the waters off its east coast.

Two of them flew about 500 to 600 kilometers (310 to 375 miles), displaying a sufficient range to reach entire South Korea, JCS spokesman Jeon Ha Gyu said. He said South Korea's military was analyzing how far the third missile flew. An earlier JCS statement said all three flew about 500 to 600 kilometers.

A statement from the Pentagon said that U.S. Strategic Command systems tracked "what we assess were three North Korean missile launches." It said two were presumed to be Scud tactical ballistic missiles, followed by the presumed launch of a Rodong intermediate range ballistic missile.

It said the missile launches did not pose a threat to North America.

North Korea routinely tests short-range missiles and artillery systems but the latest launches came days after the country warned of unspecified "physical counter-action" over the deployment of the Terminal High-Altitude Area Defense, or THAAD, system in the southern town of Seongju.

Jeon said South Korea "strongly condemns" the launches that he said posed a significant threat to national security. He said the launches were seen as an "armed protest" against the THAAD deployment.

North Korea has already deployed a variety of missiles that can reach most of South Korea and Japan, including American military bases in those countries. The country is also pushing to develop a long-range nuclear-tipped missile that can strike the mainland U.S., but South Korean defense officials believe the North does not possess such a weapon.

Seoul and Washington say they need the THAAD system to better deal with what they call increasing North Korean threats in the aftermath of its fourth nuclear test and long-range rocket launch earlier this year.

The Korean Peninsula remains in a technical state of war because the 1950-53 Korean War ended with an armistice, not a peace treaty. About 28,500 U.S. soldiers are stationed in South Korea to deter possible aggression from North Korea; tens of thousands more are stationed in Japan.

- With AP Inputs