

North Korean test missile explodes on launch, confirms US

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Washington: North Korea carried out a missile test on Sunday which failed "almost immediately," US and South Korean officials said.

North Korea military parade to mark 105th birthday of Kim Il-Sung

"The missile blew up almost immediately. The type of missile is still being assessed," the US Pacific Command said in a statement.

The US Pacific Command detected and tracked what it assessed was a North Korean missile launch at 2121 GMT on April 15, the statement said.

"The launch of the ballistic missile occurred near Sinpo," US Pacific Command spokesman CDR Dave Benham said.

USPACOM is fully committed to working closely with its allies in the Republic of Korea and in Japan to maintain security, Benham said.

Earlier, South Korea had said that a North Korean missile test had failed.

"North Korea attempted to test an unidentified type of missile from Sinpo area in the South Hamkyong Province this morning, but we suspect the launch has failed," the South's defence ministry said in a statement.

The failed launch came a day after North Korea showcased nearly 60 missiles, including what is suspected to be a new intercontinental ballistic missile, at a giant military parade to mark the 105th birthday of its founder Kim Il-Sung.

The North's test firing can be seen as a message of defiance to the Trump administration in Washington, coming as it does on the day U.S. Vice President Mike Pence is set to arrive in Seoul for talks on North Korea.

Always high animosity has risen on the Korean Peninsula in recent months, as the United States and South Korea conduct annual war games that North Korea claims are invasion preparation and the North prepared for Saturday's anniversary celebrations. A U.S. aircraft carrier, the USS Carl Vinson, is heading to waters off Korea in a show of force.

Despite Sunday's failure, the North's previous claim to have used "standardized" warheads has led to worries that it was making headway in its push to develop small and sophisticated warheads to be topped on long-range missiles.

Washington sees North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles as a threat to world security and to its Asian allies, Japan and South Korea. The United States, South Korea and other countries have vowed to apply more pressure on the North, but so far nothing has worked to stop Pyongyang's nuclear program.

Six-nation negotiations on dismantling North Korea's nuclear program in exchange for aid fell apart in early 2009.

- (With AP inputs)