

North Korea fires ballistic missile in Japan sea, Trump asks China to end Pyongyang's 'nonsense once and for all'

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After North Korea fired a ballistic missile in Japan sea today, US President Donald Trump slammed Kim Jong-Un for the provocative action and urged China to make a "heavy move" on Pyongyang to "end this nonsense once and for all".

A TV news program shows a file image of N Korean leader Kim Jong Un, at Seoul

Confirming North Korea's missile test, the US Pacific Command said that the single launch of a land-based, intermediate range ballistic missile occurred near the Panghyon Airfield.

"The President has been briefed on the latest report of a North Korean ballistic missile launch," according to the White House.

Reacting to the development on Twitter, Trump said, "North Korea has just launched another missile. Does this guy (Kim) have anything better to do with his life?"

"Hard to believe that South Korea and Japan will put up with this much longer. Perhaps China will put a heavy move on North Korea and end this nonsense once and for all!" he tweeted.

The US has been urging China "North Korea's closest diplomatic ally" to pressure the Pyongyang regime to end its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes. According to United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), the missile was tracked for 37 minutes and landed in the Sea of Japan.

"We are working with our interagency partners on a more detailed assessment. We continue to monitor North Korea's actions closely," the PACOM said.

"US Pacific Command stands behind our iron-clad commitment to the security of our allies in the Republic of Korea and Japan," it said.

The ballistic missile test is the latest in a string of recent similar launches as the North works to build a nuclear-tipped missile that can reach the U.S. mainland.

It came on the eve of the U.S. Independence Day holiday, days after the first face-to-face meeting of the leaders of South Korea and the United States, and ahead of a global summit of the world's richest economies.

Some specifics are still unclear, but the launch seems designed to send a political warning to Washington and its chief Asian allies, Seoul and Tokyo, as well as put North Korean scientists a step closer toward perfecting their still-incomplete nuclear missile program.

The Japanese government estimates that the missile fired from the North's western region flew for about 40 minutes; that would be longer than any other such previous reported tests. South Korean analysts say it's likely the North again tested one of two intermediate-range missiles it launched earlier this year.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the launch was made from North Phyongan province and flew about 930 kilometers (580 miles). The U.S. Pacific Command said a single, land-based, intermediate range ballistic missile was

tracked for 37 minutes and landed in the Sea of Japan.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga indicated this missile's capability exceeded previous ones. Suga suggested the altitude might have been higher than earlier tests. He did not give further details, including the distance of the flight and where the missile landed.

Just last week South Korean President Moon Jae-in and U.S. President Donald Trump focused much of their first meeting on opposing North Korea's development of atomic weapons that threaten both allies.

Japan's government said the missile was believed to have landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone in the Sea of Japan but no damage to ships or aircraft in the area was reported.

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sharply criticized North Korea for the launch, adding it was a reminder that Pyongyang's missile development is a growing threat.

“The latest launch clearly showed that the threat is growing,” Abe said.

Abe, who talked by phone with Trump on Monday, said the two leaders plan to seek further cooperation from world leaders when they attend the G20 summit in Germany.

Lee Illwoo, a Seoul-based military commentator, said the missile traveled for a far longer period of time than if it would have been fired at a normal angle. A North Korean scud-type missile, with a range of 800-900 kilometers, would land in its target site within 10 minutes if fired at a standard angle of 45 degrees, he said.

China's U.N. ambassador, Liu Jieyi, warned Monday that further escalation of already high tensions with North Korea risks getting out of control, “and the consequences would be disastrous.”

The Korean Peninsula has been divided between the American-backed South and the authoritarian North since the 1950-53 Korean War. Worries have increased as the North's leader Kim Jong Un pushes to expand his nuclear arsenal and develop ballistic missiles that can carry nuclear warheads.

Tuesday's launch is the first by the North since a June 8 test of a new type of cruise missile that Pyongyang says is capable of striking U.S. and South Korean warships at will.

Since taking office on May 10, Moon has tried to improve strained ties with North Korea, but the North has continued its missile tests. Pyongyang says it needs nuclear weapons and powerful missiles to cope with what it calls rising U.S. military threats.

- (With agency inputs)