

North Korea fires unidentified short-range missile towards East Sea

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Seoul: North Korea on Saturday fired an unidentified short-range missile from its eastern coast, the South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff said, a likely sign of Pyongyang's growing frustration at stalled diplomatic talks with Washington over its nuclear arsenal.

South Korean and U.S. authorities are analyzing the details, but if it is confirmed as a firing of a banned ballistic missile, it will be the first such launch since the North's November 2017 test of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

That year saw a string of increasingly powerful weapons tests from the North, and a belligerent response from President Donald Trump that had many in the region fearing war.

The firing Saturday comes amid a diplomatic breakdown that has followed the failed summit earlier this year between Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un over the North's pursuit of nuclear bombs that can accurately target the U.S. mainland.

Experts believe that the North has viable shorter-range nuclear-armed missiles but still needs more tests to perfect its longer-range weapons.

The South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the North's missile was fired from Wonsan on the nation's east coast.

During the diplomacy that followed a rocky 2017, Kim Jong Un said that the North would not test nuclear devices or ICBMs.

This short-range missile would not violate that self-imposed moratorium. It may instead be a way to register his displeasure with Washington and the state of talks meant to provide sanctions relief for disarmament without having the diplomacy collapse.

- AP