

North Korea test fires cruise missiles to demonstrate nuclear counterattack capability

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State media reports the drill demonstrated "the war posture of the DPRK nuclear combat force". (*Reuters: KCNA*)

North Korea has test fired four strategic cruise missiles during a drill designed to demonstrate its ability to conduct a nuclear counterattack against hostile forces, according to state media.

Key points:

- State media reported the four missiles hit a target after a 2,000km flight
- US and South Korean officials have taken part in a simulation focused on the possibility of North Korea using a nuclear weapon
- North Korea has accused the United Nations of being "unfair" about its military activities

The exercise on Thursday involved an operational strategic cruise missile unit of the Korean People's Army, which fired the four "Hwasal-2" missiles in the area of Kim Chaek City, North Hamgyong Province, towards the sea off the east coast of the Korean Peninsula, KCNA reported.

Other units conducted firepower training at hardened sites without live firing, it added.

The four missiles hit a pre-selected target after travelling the "2,000km-long elliptical and eight-shaped flight orbits for 10,208 seconds to 10,224 seconds," the report said.

The drill demonstrated "the war posture of the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) nuclear combat force bolstering up in every way its deadly nuclear counterattack capability against the hostile forces," KCNA said.

The missile launches were not announced by South Korea or Japan, which are often the first to detect and report such launches.

South Korea's defence ministry said the launch was monitored but there were "differences" between what it and the United States detected and the North's statement, without elaborating.

The launch came as US and South Korean officials took part in a tabletop exercise that focused on the possibility of North Korea using a nuclear weapon.

North Korea says UN has been 'unfair'

In a separate dispatch, Pyongyang's foreign ministry criticised Washington and its allies for calling a meeting of the UN Security Council over its spate of recent missile tests.

North Korea has accused the United Nations of being "unfair" about Pyongyang's military activities while keeping quiet about US and South Korean joint military exercises.

Kwon Jong Gun, the ministry's director general for US affairs, reiterated North Korea would consider "strong countermeasures" if the United Nations continued to serve as a "US tool to pressure" Pyongyang.

North Korea has forged ahead in developing and mass producing new missiles, despite sanctions imposed by United Nations Security Council resolutions that ban the nuclear-armed country's missile activities.

Many launches, including an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) on Saturday, have been reported by state media as drills designed to improve the capabilities of the troops operating the weapons. South Korean politicians citing intelligence officials said North Korea could test fire ICBMs on a lower, longer trajectory and conduct its seventh nuclear test this year to perfect its weapons capabilities.

Reuters

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