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## North Korean missile ‘blows up’ on launch

**Failed launch follows mounting anxiety in Seoul and Washington over Pyongyang threat. Arriving in South Korea hours after test, US Vice President Mike Pence reiterates support for American ally**

APRIL 16, 2017

North Korean missile “blew up almost immediately” on its test launch on Sunday, according to the US Pacific Command. The launch came hours before US Vice President Mike Pence was due in South Korea for talks on the North’s increasingly defiant arms program.

The failed launch from North Korea’s east coast, ignoring admonitions from the country’s major ally, China, came a day after a military parade in Pyongyang in which what appeared to be new long-range ballistic missiles were on display.

South Korea said the combined show of force “threatened the whole world”.

Pence is now in Seoul, where he has begun a 10-day trip to Asia. Speaking at an Easter fellowship dinner at a military base in the city, he described North Korea’s missile test as a “provocation” and assured South Korea of Washington’s full support against the threat from its volatile neighbour.

The US nuclear-powered USS Carl Vinson aircraft carrier strike group was also heading to the region.

A US Navy attack on a Syrian airfield with Tomahawk missiles raised questions earlier this month about US President Donald Trump's plans for reclusive North Korea, which has conducted several missile and nuclear tests in defiance of UN sanctions and has regularly threatened to destroy both South Korea and the United States.

South Korea, which hosts 28,500 US troops, warned of punitive action if the launch led to further provocations such as a nuclear test or a long-range missile launch.

“North Korea showing a variety of offensive missiles at yesterday's military parade and daring to fire a ballistic missile today is a show of force that threatens the whole world,” South Korea's Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The South's National Security Council said it would respond strongly to any further provocation.

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The North has warned of a nuclear strike against the United States if provoked. It claims it has developed and would launch a missile that can strike the mainland United States. However, experts believe it is some way away from mastering the necessary technology.

“The North attempted to launch an unidentified missile from near the Sinpo region this morning but it is suspected to have failed,” South Korea's Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The US Pacific Command said the missile “blew up almost immediately,” adding that the type of missile was being analysed.

Timing suggests defiance

There was a high degree of confidence that it was not an intercontinental ballistic missile, a US official said on condition of anonymity. A second US official said the launch was land-based.

The timing of the test, coinciding with Pence's trip and coming a day after the military parade, would suggest deliberate defiance.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency cited an unidentified South Korean intelligence source as saying the missile appeared not to have flown far from its land-based launch site.

The North launched a ballistic missile from the same region earlier this month ahead of a summit between the leaders of the US and China to discuss the North's arms programme. That missile flew about 60 km (40 miles) before spinning out of control.

China has spoken out against North Korea's missile and nuclear tests and has supported UN sanctions. China on Friday again called for talks to defuse the crisis.

Tension had escalated sharply in the region amid concerns that the North may conduct a sixth nuclear test or a ballistic missile test launch around the April 15 birth anniversary of founding father Kim Il Sung it calls the "Day of the Sun."

The White House has said Trump has put the North "on notice."