



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on September 30, 2022

Kamala Harris Stops in South Korea, Visits DMZ Amid North Korean Missile Tests

SINGAPORE — Vice President Kamala Harris visited the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates North and South Korea on Thursday as the final stop on her four-day trip to Asia.

During her sojourn at the tightly guarded region, Harris denounced North Korea's Kim Jong-un.

"It is clearly a provocation, and it is meant, we believe, to destabilize the region and we're taking it seriously, and everyone should," she said to reporters in response to Pyongyang firing two ballistic missiles into the waters off its east coast a day before.



AP Images

Harris' four-day trip to Asia this week was designed for her to attend the state funeral of [slain former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe](#) in Tokyo. However, she also convened with Japanese, South Korean, and Australian government leaders amid escalating hostilities provoked by two Asian communist states, namely China with its pugilistic behavior in the South China Sea and North Korea with its ballistic-missile program.

Harris is currently the most senior Biden administration official to stand just feet away from the border with North Korea during her visit on Thursday. Moreover, she proceeded to Observation Post Ouellette, where she used binoculars to look into the Hermit Kingdom as part of her tour. Images from reporters traveling with Harris indicated that as she zoomed her binoculars in on a tower in North Korea, some workers on the North Korean side looked back at her.

"I had no doubt that would happen," Harris remarked, when a U.S. service member told her that North Korean guards could be looking back at her.

Harris also met with U.S. service members and their families at the Camp Bonifas Dining Facility at the DMZ and expressed her gratitude to them for their service.

"These lives are forever benefiting because of your hard work and your dedication," Harris said.

Harris ended her visit to the DMZ with a tour of T2 Conference Row, where she received an operational briefing. However, after her tour, Harris briefly misspoke when she referred to the U.S. "alliance with the Republic of North Korea."

Her gaffe at the beginning of her speech was as follows: "So, the United States shares a very important relationship, which is an alliance with the Republic of North Korea. And it is an alliance that is strong and enduring."

Harris added, "I cannot state enough that the commitment of the United States to the defense of the Republic of Korea is ironclad and that we will do everything in our power to ensure that it has meaning in every way that the words suggest."



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An official transcript from the vice president's office disclosed hours later amended Harris' mistake in her remarks about "the Republic of Korea," deleting "North" from the record.

"The United States and the world seek a stable and peaceful Korean Peninsula where the DPRK is no longer a threat," Harris elaborated, referring to North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

"In the South, we see a thriving democracy. In the North, we see a brutal dictatorship, rampant human rights violations and an unlawful weapons program that threatens peace and stability," she was cited as saying.

Prior to her visit to the DMZ Thursday, Harris met with South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol. Based on White House statements, Harris and Yoon had discussions about the North Korean threat, the "importance of peace" in the Taiwan Strait, bilateral collaboration on economics and technology, as well as various regional issues.

Both Yoon and Harris reaffirmed their countries' security alliance and discussed their joint response to possible future provocations, which could include trilateral cooperation with Japan. Harris pointed out the advantages of improved Japan-South Korea bilateral ties and "welcomed additional initiatives on this front given our shared goals and security concerns," the White House said.

Harris highlighted the U.S. pledge to defend South Korea and bolster both nations' "combined defense posture," while reiterating that North Korea's actions "threaten peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region and the entire international community."

Yoon also [expressed worries over America's new Inflation Reduction Act \(IRA\)](#), which denies U.S. government subsidies, particularly for electric vehicles assembled outside of the United States, to South Korean businesses.

Yoon articulated "hopes that the two countries will work closely together to reach a mutually satisfactory agreement based on the spirit of the Korea-US free trade agreement."

In light of Yoon's statements, Harris said she understood South Korea's concerns, and both leaders "pledged to continue to consult as the law is implemented," the White House reported.

Harris also expressed her views about the media controversy over [Yoon's swearing gaffe in New York last week](#), whereby he was caught on camera commenting to one of his aides about "losing face if these f***** do not pass it" in Congress.

Although global news outlets were fraught with speculations that Yoon was alluding to U.S. President Joe Biden and the IRA, Yoon asserted that he was misquoted.

Harris reassured Yoon that Washington was not bothered by such postulations at all, according to Yoon's spokesman.

"[She said] President Biden has deep trust in President Yoon and is satisfied with his meetings with President Yoon," the spokesman elaborated.

The two leaders decided to make preparations for Yoon to visit the United States next year to mark the 70th anniversary of the U.S.-South Korea alliance.

Both leaders unanimously denounced North Korea's "provocative nuclear rhetoric" as well as North Korean missile tests as the two allies resumed a naval drill. They highlighted the shared goal of the complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.



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Pyongyang has carried out at least 21 rounds of missile launches since the beginning of the year. Seoul's military reported that the North fired two ballistic missile tests on Thursday. These latest tests marked Pyongyang's third such launch in less than a week and just hours after Harris left South Korea.

To fan the flames of a possible nuclear confrontation, the communist regime in the North also codified its right to use preemptive nuclear strikes in a new law in early September. Speculations are rife that Pyongyang is demonstrating its nuclear capabilities amid Harris' trip to Asia to pressure the United States into accepting the communist regime's status as a nuclear power.

Washington has approximately 28,500 troops based in South Korea to defend it from a possible invasion by North Korea. Additionally, both Washington and Seoul are organizing a large-scale joint naval exercise this week in a display of military might.

Seoul also declared that it would conduct trilateral anti-submarine drills with Japan and the United States, the first of such exercises since 2017.

South Korean officials also announced earlier that they had uncovered information that Pyongyang could fire a submarine-launched ballistic missile as well.



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