



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on May 29, 2017

N. Korea Continues Missile Tests; U.S. Moves 3rd Carrier Strike Force to Western Pacific

North Korea engaged in its latest of a series of missile tests on May 29, as the communist state fired what was believed to be a Scud-class ballistic missile that flew about 280 miles before landing in Japan's maritime economic zone. South Korean officials said that North Korea has a large stockpile of the short-range missiles, originally developed by the Soviet Union.

Reuters reported that North Korea has conducted dozens of missile tests and tested two nuclear bombs since the beginning of 2016 in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions and cited assertions made by the communist regime that the weapons programs are necessary to counter "U.S. aggression."

As North Korea continues to defy world opinion by aggressively developing weapons systems capable of threatening other countries, the United States is exhibiting a show of might by sending a third aircraft carrier strike force to the western Pacific region.

In a May 27 article, Voice of America (VOA) reported that the USS *Nimitz* will join two other aircraft carriers and their accompanying ships that make up carrier strike groups, the USS *Carl Vinson* and the USS *Ronald Reagan*, in the western Pacific, according to sources that spoke with VOA's Steve Herman.

Only the *Ronald Reagan*, part of Carrier Strike Group 9, which is home-ported at Yokosuka, Japan, as part of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, is permanently stationed in the Western Pacific.

The *Carl Vinson* is home-ported in San Diego, but in mid February started what was called "routine operations" in the South China Sea. During the first half of April 2017, Strike Group 1 (of which the *Carl Vinson* is part) was ordered toward the Korean Peninsula amid growing concerns about North Korea's ballistic missile program. It recently conducted training exercises with the South Korean Navy in the Western Pacific.

"We are sending an armada," President Trump announced on April 12, voicing a clear message to North Korea that the United States would stand firm against any aggressive actions that the communist state might take.

The USS *Nimitz* is part of Carrier Strike Group 11 (of 12 such strike groups in the U.S. Navy), the homeport of which is Naval Station Everett, in Washington State, and is being deployed from nearby Naval Base Kitsap.

The *Daily Beast* noted that sources have told both VOA and the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* that the deployment of the *Nimitz* is meant to serve as a warning to North Korea.





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“The Trump administration deployed the strike force to put pressure on Pyongyang to refrain from more nuclear and missile tests amid mounting concern that it will soon acquire the capability to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles,” *Asahi* reported.

A White House press statement posted on May 28 about President Trump’s meeting that day with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Taormina, Italy, before the start of the G7 Summit talked about how the United States and Japan intend to cooperate in facing North Korea’s threatening weapons tests:

The President said the United States will work with Japan and the Republic of Korea, as well as our other allies and partners around the world, to increase pressure on North Korea and demonstrate that North Korea’s current path is not sustainable. President Trump and Prime Minister Abe agreed their teams would cooperate to enhance sanctions on North Korea, including by identifying and sanctioning entities that support North Korea’s ballistic missile and nuclear programs. They also agreed to further strengthen the alliance between the United States and Japan, to further each country’s capability to deter and defend against threats from North Korea.

The VOA report also noted that the U.S. military will test a system to shoot down an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) for the first time next week. The test will attempt to simulate a North Korean ICBM aimed at the United States.

VOA cited a statement from the Missile Defense Agency that the exercise will test an existing missile defense system to try to intercept an ICBM. The Pentagon has used the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD) system to intercept other types of missiles, but never an ICBM.

The GMD has been inconsistent, noted the report, succeeding in only nine of 17 attempts against missiles without intercontinental range capability since 1999.

We also discussed the U.S. GMD system in [our May 22 article](#) about North Korea’s missile tests. We commented on White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer’s call for stronger sanctions against North Korea by noting:

Our reaction to that statement was that most Americans would probably be more reassured if our government would work at perfecting a better anti-ballistic missile (ABM) system that could intercept any North Korean missiles fired in our direction, instead of placing our hopes on sanctions.

We observed that, at present, the only system capable of intercepting North Korean missiles is the Ground-Based Midcourse Defense (GMD). However, we noted, as North Korea increases the range and accuracy of its medium range missile and eventually develops Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), the reliability of these systems will need to be improved. As of June 2014, only nine of the 17 (53 percent) hit-to-kill intercept tests have succeeded.

It is encouraging that VOA (which is a U.S. government-funded news source) cited the same statistics related to the GMD’s unreliability that we noted in our earlier report. If our government recognizes this fact and intends to develop a better anti-ICBM system, it will go a long way toward protecting Americans from North Korea’s threats.

Photo of large screen in Osaka, Japan, showing TV coverage of North Korea’s latest missile test: AP Images

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