



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on March 7, 2017

North Korea Admits Missile Launches Were Test of Possible Strike Against U.S. Bases in Japan

Communist North Korea's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported on March 7 that the nation's launch of four missiles the previous day was part of practice tests to hone its ability to strike U.S. military bases in Japan.

The four missiles were fired from a launch site on North Korea's west coast and traveled more than 600 miles across the country before crashing into the Sea of Japan between Japan and the Korean Peninsula, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a text message to local reporters.



During a White House press conference on March 6, a reporter asked Press Secretary Sean Spicer for the White House's reaction to North Korea's firing of the four ballistic missiles.

Spicer replied:

The launches are consistent with North Korea's long history of provocative behavior. The United States stands with our allies in the face of this very serious threat. The Trump administration is taking steps to enhance our ability to defend against North Korea's ballistic missiles, such as through the deployment of a THAAD battery to ... South Korea.

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The Japanese government said that three of the missiles splashed down within Japan's exclusive economic zone and within about 200 miles of the coastline of Japan's Akita prefecture. "These missile launches clearly show that North Korea has developed a new threat," Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters. "We will collect information and strongly protest to North Korea."

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the launch of the four missiles while "feasting his eyes on the trails of ballistic rockets," the KCNA reported in a statement that analysts quoted by the *Washington Post* called a "brazen declaration" of the country's intent to strike enemies with a nuclear weapon if it came under attack.

"If the United States or South Korea fires even a single flame inside North Korean territory, we will demolish the origin of the invasion and provocation with a nuclear tipped missile," said the KCNA statement. The missiles fired on March 6 were "tasked to strike the bases of the U.S. imperialist aggressor forces in Japan," the statement continued.

The *Post* report cited Jeffrey Lewis, director of the East Asia Nonproliferation Program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies in California, who said that North Korea had previously tested the types of missiles launched on March 6, so the apparent objective of the latest launches was not to see if they would fly, but to test how quickly they could be set and deployed — which is classic training for a wartime situation.



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“They want to know if they can get these missiles out into the field rapidly and deploy them all at once,” Lewis said. “They are practicing launching a nuclear-armed missile and hitting targets in Japan as if this was a real war.”

CNN reported on March 7 that there are currently about 54,000 U.S. troops stationed in at least seven bases scattered across Japan, from Misawa Air Base in the far north to Okinawa in the far south.

The report noted that these military bases in Japan cost the U.S. government about \$5.5 billion in 2016.

Some reports have indicated that North Korea may have conducted its missile launch in reaction to joint U.S.-South Korean military drills, as well as the U.S. deployment of a THAAD battery to South Korea.

THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) is a U.S. Army anti-ballistic missile system designed to shoot down short, medium, and intermediate range ballistic missiles in their terminal phase using a hit-to-kill approach. THAAD was developed to counter Iraq’s Scud missile attacks during the Gulf War in 1991. The missile carries no warhead, but relies on the kinetic energy of impact to destroy the incoming missile.

U.S. officials said that the missiles launched by North Korea were extended range SCUD missiles — the type that THAAD is designed to intercept. However, THAAD would have difficulty intercepting four missiles launched at the same time, unnamed analysts cited by the *Post* said.

The first parts of the THAAD system arrived the same day as the North Korean missile launch at Osan Air Base south of Seoul, South Korea’s Defense Ministry said.

The *Post* observed that North Korea’s launches coincided with joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises on the southern half of the Korean Peninsula that take place every year. North Korea has said in the past that it views these exercises as preparation for an invasion of the North.

Joshua Pollack, editor of the *Nonproliferation Review*, said in a statement cited by the *Post* that these latest launches appeared designed to send a message to both Trump and the Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe, who was visiting the U.S. president when North Korea fired a medium- to long-range ballistic missile into the Sea of Japan on February 12.

As we [noted in an article following that missile launch](#), Abe said that he expected the Trump administration to adopt a harder line on North Korea. Speaking during a joint appearance with Trump in Florida on the evening of February 11, Abe said: “North Korea’s most recent missile launch is absolutely intolerable.”

Trump also made a brief statement after the missile launch: “I just want everybody to understand and fully know that the United States of America stands behind Japan, its great ally, 100 percent.”

After these latest missile tests by North Korea, Trump spoke by phone with Abe and South Korea’s acting president, Hwang Kyo-ahn, on March 7.

“Both Japan and the U.S. confirmed that this North Korean missile launch was a clear violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions and was an obvious challenge to the region and the international community,” Abe told reporters in Tokyo, repeating his assertion that the North Korean threat had “reached a new stage.”

These latest sabre-rattling actions taken by communist North Korea underline the perilous position the United States has taken since the end of World War II that continues to put U.S. military personnel in harm’s way. As noted by CNN, there are currently about 54,000 U.S. troops in Japan. The reason we



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have those troops stationed there is that following World War II, which was more than 70 years ago, the United States forced Japan to adopt a new constitution that keeps it permanently weak militarily. Article 9 of that constitution, particularly, prevents Japan from building a potent offensive military force.

As a result, the United States has maintained a large military force in Japan since the war, ostensibly to defend Japan against an invasion from Communist China.

Additionally, the United States keeps 25,000 troops in South Korea, presumably to deter North Korea from invading the South. This is a consequence of our government's failure to achieve victory during the Korean War (which we should not have entered, but having entered it, we should have sought victory instead of a truce). The U.S. commander during the early years of the Korean War, General Douglas MacArthur, is noted for having said: "War's very object is victory, not prolonged indecision. In war there is no substitute for victory."

However, when President Harry Truman relieved MacArthur of his command on April 11, 1951 after MacArthur made public statements that contradicted the administration's policies, the one military leader who could lead our forces to victory was removed from the action.

The war dragged on until fighting was ended by a truce on July 27, 1953 that resulted in a military stalemate. However, no peace treaty has been signed, and the two Koreas are technically still at war. The worst consequence of abandoning the victory that MacArthur sought, and likely could have achieved, was that the northern half of the peninsula was left under communist control.

Today's crises, which intrinsically involve the United States, are the result of abandoning victory and leaving the communists in power in North Korea. If the United States had maintained a noninterventionist foreign policy since World War II, there would be no reason to maintain any U.S. troops overseas. We not only have almost 80,000 troops in harm's way in Japan and South Korea, but the expense of maintaining those troops is several billion dollars. That money could be better spent on repairing America's decaying infrastructure.

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