

U.S. Official Says North Korea Is Testing New ICBM System

A pair of North Korean launches detected in recent weeks were tests of a new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) system, a senior U.S. official said Thursday.

“After a careful analysis the US government has conclude[d] that the DPRK’s two ballistic missile tests on February 26 and March 4 of this year involved a relatively new intercontinental ballistic missile system that the DPRK is developing,” a senior administration official told reporters in a background briefing, according to CNN.

The missiles in question are believed to be larger than an ICBM North Korea launched in 2017 that was assessed to be capable of reaching the United States, the Associated Press reported. The official warned that a full-range test of the new long-range ICBM could occur soon.

“These launches are likely intended to test elements of this new systems before the DPRK conducts a launch in full range, which they will potentially attempt to disguise as a space launch,” said the official, who called the tests a “serious escalation.”

The new assessment was made “in close coordination with our allies in the Republic of Korea and Japan,” he continued.

The US Indo-Pacific Command has “ordered intensified intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance collection activity in the Yellow Sea, as well as enhanced readiness among our ballistic missile defense forces in the region” in preparation for a full-range test, the official said. The U.S. is also set to announce sanctions on Friday to make it more difficult for North Korea to access technology needed for its weapons program.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said last week that the March 4 missile was launched from an area near the North Korean capital and traveled roughly 168 miles eastward at a maximum altitude of 348 miles. It landed in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan.

The North Korean government is claiming that the recent launches were conducted to test cameras for spy satellites.

Source:

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