

US envoy vows 'decisive response' to North Korea missile, nuclear tensions

SEOUL: The US envoy for North Korea said that Washington would act "responsibly and decisively" in response to "escalatory actions" after a series of test missile launches raised concerns that the North was preparing to resume nuclear testing.

US Special Representative Sung Kim and his deputy, Jung Pak, met with South Korean officials, including nuclear envoy Noh Kyu-duk, after arriving in Seoul early on Monday (Apr 18) for a five-day visit.

"We, of course, share your concerns about the DPRK's escalatory actions and we will continue to work closely to respond responsibly and decisively to the provocative behaviour," Kim told Noh as their talks began.

Kim was referring to North Korea as its official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

His latest trip was an "indication of our determination and commitment to maintain the closest possible coordination" between the allies on the developments in the North, he added.

Kim's arrival coincided with the start of a nine-day annual joint military drill by US and South Korean troops.

The exercise consists of "defensive command post training using computer simulation" and will not involve field manoeuvres by troops, South Korea's joint chiefs of staff said on Sunday.

North Korea has condemned the joint drills as rehearsals for war, and they have been scaled back in recent years amid efforts to engage Pyongyang in diplomacy, and because of COVID-19 restrictions.

On Saturday, North Korea test fired what state media said were missiles involved in delivering tactical nuclear weapons.

The US envoy has said he is open to talks with North Korea at any time and without preconditions, but Pyongyang has so far rebuffed those overtures, accusing Washington of maintaining hostile policies such as sanctions and the military drills.

South Korean media reported that Kim was also expected to meet with the transition team for President-elect Yoon Suk-yeol, who takes office in May.

A spokesperson for the team said there was no meeting confirmed between Yoon and Kim, and could not immediately verify whether the envoy would be meeting other transition officials.

Kim also said at his talks with Noh that Washington looks forward to working closely with Yoon's team.

Source:

<https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/us-envoy-vows-decisive-response-north-korea-missile-nuclear-tensions-2631726>

[Disclaimer]