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East Asia

# What was behind the North Korea missile launch on November 29

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**Donald Trump made his maiden trip to Asia as US president from November 5 to 14 this year. President He ordered a widening of sanctions on Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) from Japan, Republic of Korea (South Korea), China, Vietnam, and Philippines. On the other hand, North Korea launched ballistic missile again toward Japan around 03:18 (Japan Time) on November 29. This article analyzes the background of the missile launch and its implications for all our futures.**

## Overview and background of North Korea missile launch on November 29

In the early morning of November 29, North Korea launched a ballistic missile toward Japan for the first time in 75 days. The missile dropped to the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of Japan. This is the 17th missile launch for North Korea. On August 29 and September 15 this year, a missile was launched from Pyongyang Sunan International Airport near the capital city. But this time, in November, the missile was launched from a frequent-used position: the border area near China. North Korean missiles have passed over the Japanese archipelago 7 times, including this time.

This missile launch test is different compared with the past. First, this missile was launched without advance notice about the launch direction. From the Hwasong-12 ballistic missile launch of August 29 this year, North Korea does not give advance notice to neighboring countries.

Second, this missile was launched in the early morning. It seems like they assumed a surprise attack strategy.

Third, the flight distance of the missile was unprecedented: with a distance far beyond 5500 km. Following is the comparison between the missiles launched in the past and this time:

Flight distance of August 29 missile: 2,700km

Flight distance of September 15 missile: 3,700km

Flight distance of November 29 missile: far beyond 5500 km

Flight distances have increased little by little. And the distances from Pyongyang to the cities of US are as follows:

From Pyongyang to Guam: about 3,400km

From Pyongyang to Alaska: about 6,000km

From Pyongyang to Washington: about 11,000km

As of September 15, North Korea missiles will reach Guam. And this time, North Korea missile will reach US mainland: Alaska.

On November 29, a government statement reported by Korean central news agency said that they succeeded in launching the new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) Hwasong-15 which can reach US mainland. North Korea has crossed the "red line" which may lead to military action by US President Donald Trump. East Asia is in a critical tense situation.

## Conclusion

North Korea will not stop missile launch tests and nuclear development if there is a threat to their national security and will continue to launch missiles in the direction of Japan and US, avoiding friendly nations such as Russia and China, which stimulate Japan and US to increase their military power.

South Korea will also continue military counteraction against North Korea. In the past, South Korea launched their ballistic missiles (Hyunmoo-2B) to Japan Sea after the North Korea missile launch of September 15. This will also create a part of an escalating crisis in East Asia where a large number of US troops are stationed. [1]

On the other hand, Japan and South Korea do not have any ways to apply effective pressure on North Korea. But China has many ways to apply effective pressure on North Korea. Interrupting crude oil supply from China to North Korea will end people's lives in North Korea.

Song Tao [2], a special envoy of Chinese President Xi Jinping, went to Pyongyang from November 17-20. He met senior North Korean officials on November 18. According to North Korea's state media, the two exchanged views about issues of mutual concern on the situation of the Korean peninsula and region, as well as bilateral relations.

Some reports suggested that Song might meet with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. But he did not meet with Kim Jong Un. And the North Korea missile launch was resumed just after the return of Song Tao to China. There are many unclear points about his visit to Pyongyang. Imminent situation will have been occurred around November 17. [3] The worst-case scenario was temporarily avoided in Korean Peninsula.

In the tense situation of the Korean peninsula, what is to be done to break through the crisis?

First of all, the US army should stop military provocation against North Korea to alleviate tension in East Asia. North Korea should also stop nuclear development and frequent missile launches. Peoples' movements are responsible for alleviation of military tension in East Asia. And radical anti-war forces including Fourth International should also play a critical role in movements to abolish nuclear weapons.

The escalating crisis in East Asia is not an issue only for East Asian people but also for people across the whole world.

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[1] According to the Military Balance 2003, 37% of worldwide US military forces were concentrated in Asia area: with Japan first at 39,623 troops and South Korea 3rd at 23,297).

[2] Chinese politician and senior diplomat, currently serving as the head of the International Liaison Department of the Communist Party of China.

[3] Contrary to regular diplomatic relations between China and Korea, the position of the special envoy was low. In the past, political officials within 25th power visited Pyongyang as a special envoy of Chinese President. But this time, special envoy Song Tao belongs to political officials within 204th power. Some imminent situation will have been created around November 17 as political officials of the lowest level suddenly visited Pyongyang to meet Kim Jong-un (the Chairman of the Workers' Party of Korea) without a consensus-building process.