

N Korea fires its first ICBM in three months after warning US

North Korea test-fired its first intercontinental ballistic missile in three months on Wednesday, days after it threatened "shocking" consequences to protest what it called provocative United States reconnaissance activity near its territory.

Some experts say North Korea likely launched its developmental, road-mobile Hwasong-18 ICBM, a type of solid-fuel weapon that is harder to detect and intercept than its liquid-fuel ICBMs. North Korean leader Kim Jong-un previously called the Hwasong-18 the most powerful weapon of his nuclear forces, AP reported.

The missile, fired from North Korea's capital region around 10 a.m., flew about 1,000 kilometers at a maximum altitude of 6,000 kilometers before landing in waters between the Korean Peninsula and Japan, according to South Korean and Japanese assessments. They said the missile was launched at a high angle in what observers say was an apparent attempt to avoid neighboring countries.

Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno said the missile flew for 74 minutes – the longest flight time recorded by any

weapon launched by North Korea.

South Korea's military called the launch "a grave provocation" and urged North Korea to refrain from additional launches. Matsuno denounced North Korea's repeated missile launches as "threats to the peace and safety of Japan, the region and international society."

In a trilateral phone call, the chief nuclear envoys of South Korea, Japan and the US agreed to sternly deal with North Korean provocations and boost their coordination to promote a stronger international response to the North's nuclear and missile programs, according to Seoul's Foreign Ministry.

The launch came while South Korean President Yoon Suk-yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida were attending the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. In an emergency meeting of South Korea's security council convened by video in Lithuania, Yoon warned North Korea would face more powerful international sanctions due to its illicit weapons programs.

The North's ICBM test in April was the first launch of the Hwasong-18. After that launch, Kim said the



missile would enhance the North's counterattack capabilities.

Earlier this week, North Korea released a series of statements accusing the US of flying a military spy plane close to its soil.

In a statement on Monday, Kim's sister and top adviser, Kim Yo-jong, warned the United States of "a

shocking incident" as she said that the US spy plane flew over the North's eastern exclusive economic zone eight times earlier in the day.

The US and South Korea dismissed the North's accusations and urged it to refrain from any acts or rhetoric that raised animosities.

UN Security Council resolutions ban North Korea from engaging in any launches using ballistic technologies. But China and Russia, both permanent members of the council, blocked the US and others' attempts to toughen UN sanctions on North Korea over its recent ballistic missile tests.

Abbas vows to rebuild Jenin after deadly Israeli raid



Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas recites a prayer as he lays a wreath of flowers by the graves of Palestinians killed in recent Israeli military raids on the Jenin camp, on July 12, 2023. **● ZAIN JAAFAR / AFP**

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas vowed Wednesday to rebuild the Jenin refugee camp during a rare visit that came a week after a deadly Israeli raid left much of it destroyed.

Abbas described the camp as an "icon of struggle" during his first visit in over a decade to the camp in the northern West Bank city, AFP reported.

Twelve Palestinians and one Israeli soldier were killed last week in the two-day raid on Jenin, the largest in years by Israeli forces.

The raid on the camp, which Israel views as a "terrorism hub", employed hundreds of troops as well as drone strikes and army bulldozers that tore up streets and damaged scores of houses.

cluding deputy chairman Mahmoud Aloul, had visited the camp soon after the raid.

On Wednesday, Abbas expressed determination to back Jenin's reconstruction and security.

He described the camp as an "icon of steadfastness and struggle", in a short address as crowds of supporters cheered.

"We have come to say that we are one authority, one state, one law," he said, warning against anyone who "tampered with the unity and security of our people". He further vowed to oversee the reconstruction of the camp and the city to restore it "to what it was or even better".

As he concluded his visit, Abbas laid a wreath on the graves of Palestinians who lost their lives in recent Israeli raids.

A number of Arab coun-

tries have announced aid for the camp after last week's offensive.

The Jenin camp was established in 1953 to house some of those among the 760,000 Palestinians who fled or were expelled from their homes in 1948, the Nakba, or catastrophe, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were displaced from their homes following the creation of Israel.

Over time, the camp's original tents have been replaced by concrete, and it now resembles something closer to a neighbourhood.

The camp, which houses some 18,000 people, was also a hotbed of activity during the second "intifada" or uprising of the early 2000s.

Abbas, 87, last visited Jenin in 2012 but had not toured the camp at the time.

China lashes back at NATO criticism, warns it will protect its rights

Beijing lashed back at NATO's accusation that China challenges the bloc's interests and security, and opposed any attempt by the military alliance to expand its footprint into the Asia-Pacific region.

In a strongly worded communique issued midway into a two-day summit in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius on Tuesday, NATO said the People's Republic of China (PRC) challenged its interests, security and values with its "ambitions and coercive policies," Reuters reported.

"The PRC employs a broad range of political, economic, and military tools to increase its global footprint and project power, while remaining opaque about its strategy, intentions and military build-up," NATO heads of state said in their communique.

"The PRC's malicious hybrid and cyber operations and its confrontational rhetoric and disinformation target Allies and harm Alliance security." The Chinese mission to the European said in a statement on Tuesday the China-related content of the communique disregarded basic facts, distorted China's position and policies, and deliberately discredited China.

"We firmly oppose and reject this," it said.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters at the summit that while China was not a NATO "adversary", it was increasingly challenging the rules-based international order with its "coercive behaviour." "China is increasingly challenging the rules-based international order, refusing to condemn Russia's war against Ukraine, threatening Taiwan, and carrying out a substantial military build-up," he said.

In the communique, NATO said China sought to control key technological and industrial sectors, critical infrastructure, and strategic materials and supply chains, and that Beijing also used its economic leverage to create strategic dependencies and enhance its influence.

China's state-run Xinhua news agency hit back, saying in a report that the wars and conflicts involving NATO states suggest the bloc is a "grave challenge" to global peace and stability.

"Despite all the chaos and conflict already inflicted, NATO is spreading its tentacles to the Asia-Pacific region with an express aim of containing China."



● THOMAS PETER/REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sudan conflict displaces around 3.1m:

UN



AP – A raging conflict in Sudan has driven around 3.1 million people from their homes, including more than 700,000 who fled to neighboring countries, the UN said Wednesday, amid growing concerns that the country is sliding into a "full-scale civil war."

Sudan has plunged into chaos since mid-April when monthslong tensions between the military and its rival, the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, exploded into open fighting in the capital, Khartoum, and elsewhere across the northeastern African nation.

Turkey, Greece say to repair ties after year of tension

REUTERS – Greece and Turkey agreed on Wednesday to resume talks and confidence-building measures as they hailed a new "positive climate" in ties after more than a year of tensions between the historic foes.

The two NATO allies have been at odds for decades over a range of issues including where their continental shelves start and end, energy resources, overflights of the Aegean Sea, and ethnically split Cyprus.

'Explosive traces found on yacht in Nord Stream inquiry'



REUTERS – Germany found traces of subsea explosives in samples taken from a yacht that it suspects "may have been used to transport the explosives" to blow up the Nord Stream gas pipelines, it told the UN Security Council in a letter with Sweden and Denmark. A series of unexplained explosions hit the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines connecting Russia and Germany under the Baltic Sea last September in the exclusive economic zones of Germany, Sweden and Denmark.