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North Korea fires 'projectiles', South Korea says stop raising tensions

SEOUL (Reuters) - North Korea fired several "unidentified short-range projectiles" into the sea off its east coast on Saturday, prompting South Korea to call on its communist neighbor to "stop acts that escalate military tension on the Korean Peninsula".

The South Korean military initially described it as a missile launch, but subsequently gave a more vague description. The latest firing came after the North's test of what it called a tactical guided weapons system in April.

Analysts suspected the flurry of military activity by Pyongyang was an attempt to exert pressure on the United States to give ground in negotiations to end the North's nuclear program after a summit in February ended in failure.

South Korea's presidency urged North Korea to refrain from further action in one of the most stiffly-worded statements since the two Koreas embarked on reconciliation efforts early last year.

"We are very concerned about the North's latest action," South Korea's presidential spokeswoman said in the statement, adding that it violates an inter-Korean military agreement.

"We expect North Korea to actively join efforts towards the fast resumption of denuclearization talks," she said, after a meeting attended by the country's defense minister, presidential security advisors, and intelligence chief.

In a Twitter message Saturday morning, President Donald Trump said he was still confident that he could reach a deal with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "I believe that Kim Jong Un fully realizes the great economic potential of North Korea, & will do nothing to interfere or end it," Trump wrote. "He also knows that I am with him & does not want to break his promise to me. Deal will happen!"

A man watches a television screen showing a news report on North Korea firing several short-range projectiles from its east coast, on a street in Tokyo, Japan May 4, 2019. REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon

A U.S. State Department spokesman declined to comment on North Korea's military action, instead referring Reuters to Trump's tweet.

Talks stalled after a second summit between Kim and Trump in Hanoi in February failed to produce a deal to end Pyongyang's nuclear program in return for sanctions relief.

Yang Uk, a senior research fellow at the Korea Defence and Security Forum, described Saturday's action as an expression of the North's frustration.

"It is a message that it could return to the previous confrontational mode if there is no breakthrough in the stalemate," said Yang.

The projectiles, fired from the east coast city of Wonsan around 9 a.m. (0000 GMT) flew about 70 kms to 200 kms (44-124 miles) in a north-easterly direction, South Korea's Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

The South Korean military said it was conducting joint analysis with the United States of the latest launches. Experts say the projectiles appeared to come from multiple rocket launchers, and were not ballistic missiles.

The North's last missile launch was in November 2017, when it tested an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM). Soon after that missile test, the North declared that its nuclear force was complete, after which Pyongyang extended an olive branch to the South and the United States.

But, on Tuesday, North Korea's vice foreign minister warned that the United States would face "undesired consequences" if it fails to present a new position in denuclearization talks by the end of the year.

SECURITY GUARANTEE

Trump raised the issue of North Korea during a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday. White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders said Trump told Putin several times "the need and importance of Russia stepping up and continuing to put pressure on North Korea to denuclearize."

A woman walks past a sign printed with the characters of the name of the new Japanese imperial era Reiwa next to a television screen showing North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un during a news report on North Korea firing several short-range projectiles from its east coast, in Tokyo, Japan May 4, 2019. REUTERS/Kim Kyung-Hoon

During a summit with Putin in late April, North Korea's Kim said that peace and security on the Korean peninsula depended on the United States, warning that a state of hostility could easily return, according to North Korean media.



A North Korean soldier keeps watch toward the south through a binocular telescope at the truce village of Panmunjom



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HPD officer connected to deadly raid, shootout relieved of duty

A veteran Houston police narcotics officer has been relieved of duty due to "ongoing questions" that have emerged over his role in a raid last week that ended in a deadly mid-afternoon shootout, police said Thursday. Five police officers were injured – four by gunfire – during the Jan. 28 raid in the 7800 block of Harding Street. The officer relieved of duty was not injured in the raid, officials said.

The home's residents – Dennis Tuttle and Rhogena Nicholas – were killed in the shootout.

"We have confirmed that at least one narcotics officer has been relieved of duty due to ongoing questions that cannot be answered until the case agent is interviewed," police union president Joe Gamaldi said in a written statement

"The department made the decision to relieve the officer of duty while a thorough investigation continues. Nearly all officers relieved of duty return to work quickly after an investigation is complete. Rumors will undoubtedly continue until the case agent is able to be interviewed. Unfortunately, his gunshot wound has resulted in him being incapacitated while surgeries continue. Any assumptions or conclusions made prior to the interview taking place, are just assumptions."

Houston Police Chief Art Acevedo released a statement but did not release any information regarding the officer in question.

"When an officer-involved shooting occurs at HPD, we consider it a legal and moral obligation to conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the circumstances leading up to and resulting in the officer-involved shooting," Acevedo said. "There is a lot of speculation as to the circumstances regarding this officer-involved shooting at 7815 Harding Street, but we urge everyone to let the investigation take its proper course and proceed to conclusion."

"As I said last Thursday to our community, we will leave no stone unturned to determine the good, the bad and the ugly," he said. "We owe this to the officers involved and their families, the deceased suspects' families and the com-

munity we serve."

The Harris County District Attorney's Office said Thursday it would conduct a civil rights investigation of the shooting and present the findings to a grand jury. Such investigations and grand jury consideration are standard with officer-involved shootings, according to spokesman Dane Schiller.

"Our Civil Rights Division prosecutors are currently working with the Houston Police Department's special investigation team to look at every aspect of this incident," District Attorney Kim Ogg said Thursday in a statement. "As is our policy, every shooting by a police officer -- in every instance -- is presented to a grand jury to determine if any criminal charges are warranted."

He said the DA's office will wait for the Houston police to complete their internal investigation. Prosecutors were at the scene of the shooting, he said, but don't step in for a civil rights investigation until the internal investigation is complete.

Acevedo said the police department is working closely with the district attorney's office.

"I know that in addition to the officer-involved shooting itself, many have questions regarding the circumstances surrounding the search warrant," Acevedo said. "All of these questions are part of our ongoing criminal and administrative investigations. Rather than releasing piecemeal information, consistent with our commitment to transparency, we will report our findings at the conclusion of our investigations."

The drug probe leading up to the botched bust started on Jan. 8, when officials say an anonymous caller phoned police to complain that her daughter was "doing drugs" inside the Harding



Street home.

When officers showed up, they didn't see any suspicious activity, but stopped a passerby to ask if she'd called 911. She hadn't, but - according to what Acevedo told reporters at a Jan. 31 press conference - the woman allegedly turned back to her phone call and said, "Hey the police are at the dope house."

Afterward, police launched a full-on investigation and eventually sent in a confidential informant, authorities said. That buy allegedly netted some quantity of heroin, though officials have never said how much of the drug they recovered.

The next day, police used that purchase as a key piece of their request for a no-knock search warrant at the quiet Pecan Park home. In a three-page sworn affidavit, officers laid out their reasons for the raid.

Before the buy, police said they met with the informant - who'd worked with them on 10 other cases - and searched him for drugs. When he came out, according to the court filing, he turned over a packet of brown powder he called "boy," which is slang for heroin.

The informant also warned police of a "large quantity" of drugs inside, packaged in plastic baggies, and a 9mm handgun, an investigator - whose name was redacted - wrote in the sworn statement.



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Editor's Choice



FILE PHOTO: Abdul Qader Murtada, head of the Houthi delegation, attends a new round of talks to discuss a prisoners swap deal between Yemen's warring parties, in Amman



Festival director Dieter Kosslick and members of the International Jury Juliette Binoche, Trudie Styler, Rajendra Roy, Sandra Hueller, Justin Chang and Sebastian Lelio attend for the opening ceremony of the 69th Berlin Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, REUTERS/Hannibal Hanschke



Tear gas is seen as Sudanese demonstrators take part in an anti-government protest in Khartoum



Sudanese demonstrators march during an anti-government protest in Khartoum



Festival director Dieter Kosslick attends for the opening ceremony of the 69th Berlin Film Festival in Berlin, Germany, REUTERS/Hannibal Hanschke



Residents try to rescue a car pushed by the floods to a channel after heavy rains in Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood in Rio de Janeiro



U.S. Representative Ocasio-Cortez speaks during a news conference for a proposed "Green New Deal" at the U.S. Capitol in Washington



FILE PHOTO: A worker cuts tomatoes off the vine at a greenhouse in La Piedad, in Michoacan state, Mexico, Picture taken REUTERS/Alan Ortega/File Photo

An Open Invitation

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



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T4T is for emerging and seasoned leaders, residents who have been involved in community building OR individuals who work for an organization that supports community development. T4T participants must be able to attend 5 monthly learning sessions, connect to a coaching partner between sessions, co-facilitate another leadership training session (Leading Together), and commit to teaching other leaders after they graduate the program. See the program flyer for more information. (Go to <https://files.constantcontact.com/867888f4101/f786fe1c-8aa9-4f7d-9ccd-bdba15b83325.pdf> for a copy of the flyer.)

We have a limited number of seats and would like to extend the opportunity for you to nominate candidates you think

would be a good fit for this opportunity. This flyer gives more information about the program, meeting times, and expectations. Please share it with any potential nominees.

Applications to the program are due April 30th and can be submitted electronically by completing the application (see above link). Please share this link and flyer with those individuals you wish to nominate. Candidates will be interviewed and se-

lected by the end of May for a program start date of June 8th. - Interviews start soon; apply now!

Please let me know if you have any questions about the T4T program or how to nominate an individual.

Thank you for spreading the word!
Best Regards,
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President Trump recently indicated plans to change policies for visa holders, tweeting that a “path to citizenship” for H-1B holders was potentially possible under his administration.

In a tweet posted as the president returned from his trip the day before to the U.S.-Mexico border, Trump declared that the U.S. desires to see “talented and highly skilled people” immigrate to the U.S. and pursue careers.

“H-1B holders in the United States can rest assured that changes are soon coming which will bring both simplicity and certainty to your stay, including a potential path to citizenship,” Trump said.

“We want to encourage talented and highly skilled people to pursue career options in the U.S.,” he continued.



The H-1B system, which allows U.S. companies to hire temporary foreign workers to fill needs not met by the U.S. workforce, is not intended as a permanent path to citizenship for immigrants coming to the United States.

Immigration reform has been a centerpiece of the Trump administration. (Courtesy <https://thehill.com/blogs>)

Related

What Changes Are Coming In 2019 To The H1B Visa Program?

What is the status of the current U.S. H1B visa program and what can we look forward to in 2019?

Foreigners view the H1B visa as the golden gate to furthering their career, starting a family and building a new life in America. The visa is particularly popular because you can also transition from it to a green card. Many applicants are international students

Trump’s Message To H-1B Visa Holders: ‘Path To Citizenship’ Could Be Coming Soon



Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

trying to transition from F-1 student status to H-1B work visas on route to a green card. Each year, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) opens a total of 85,000 such visas — 65,000 for those applicants who have a bachelor’s degree or equivalent, and 20,000 for those with a master’s degree or higher. The USCIS begins accepting applications on the first business day of April each year. Within the first week, the visa allocation is exhausted. This year is the sixteenth year in a row that the H-1B program has experienced such an overload of applicants. In the first week of this fiscal year, nearly 200,000 petitions were received. To cope with this excessive demand for the work visas, the USCIS has employed a lottery to choose successful candidates.

Nearly half of Fortune 500 companies were founded by first or second-generation immigrants and no doubt, many were former H-1B visa holders. According to a recent report, U.S. tech giants like Amazon, Microsoft, Google and Intel are among the top 10 employers of approved H-1B applicants. Amazon itself, was the second highest guarantor of H-1B visas in 2017 with 2,515 such visas, sharply up from the previous year. U.S. educators have established without doubt that the entry of foreign-born scientists and engineers remains an unmatched source of “strength and vitality” for the country’s tech industry.



According to an NFAP source, “Employers report the time lost due to the increase in denials and Requests for Evidence has cost millions of dollars in project delays and

contract penalties, while aiding competitors that operate exclusively outside the United States.”



On November 19th, 2018 the U.S. Department of Labor began requiring that employers of H-1B applicants use a new Labor Condition Application form (LCA), ETA 9035. Critics claim the new form is designed to elicit internal information from employers and increase government pressure upon H-1B employed companies, with the intended possibility of negative attention from the press.

The new labor conditions could deter tech companies from hiring skilled graduates abroad lest they fork out too much in annual wages, and could compel them to “hire American” in line with Trump’s new order. Alternatively, if companies cannot source adequate American-born employees, the new conditions may result in selected foreign employees being appointed at much higher salaries. The true effects of this new LCA form have yet to be seen.

From the perspective of both foreigners and international students, the uncertainty of such U.S. policies and denials, can be overwhelming. These U.S. restrictions impact Indian and Chinese nationals most because they account for the vast majority of these visas. For example, they accounted for 82 per cent of H-1B visas in 2016. Indian workers specifically are known to specialize in IT-related jobs, helping fill the gaps in the tech industry.

However, not all U.S. initiatives regarding H-1B visas have necessarily been bad. A change in the way the USCIS conducts its lottery may benefit some H-1B applicants. In particular, international students graduat-

ing from US colleges with master’s degrees (and other advanced degrees) may soon have a much better chance of receiving an H-1B visa in the United States. The proposed new policy changes the rules of the lottery system used to determine who will receive the H-1B visa as follows:

1. USCIS will reverse the order by which USCIS selects H-1B petitions under the H-1B cap and the advanced degree exemption. This will increase the number of selected H-1B beneficiaries with a master’s degree or higher from a U.S. institution of higher education up to 16% (or 5,340 workers).
2. USCIS will require petitioners seeking to file H-1B cap-subject petitions to first electronically register with USCIS. The employers will not need to send in the H-1B petitions and supporting documentation before the cap selection process. This will ease the amount of work required to apply for the H-1B visas.



USCIS expects that shifting to electronic registration would reduce overall costs for petitioners and create a more efficient and cost-effective H-1B cap petition process for USCIS.



As the political landscape in Washington changes following the results of the recent 2018 election, hopefully more positive changes will be introduced to increase the effectiveness of the H-1B visa program. (Courtesy forbes.com)

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