



[North Korea Test-Fires 2 Projectiles Amid Stalled Talks With the US](#)

On October 31st, North Korea launched two short-range ballistic missiles that flew 230 miles before landing in waters between Japan and North Korea. The launch comes just as the United States and North Korea's new talks stalled regarding dismantling the North Korean nuclear weapons program. This is the latest weapons test that North Korea has conducted since its October 2nd ballistic missile launch from the Pukguksong-3 submarine. The Pukguksong-3 missile drew concern as it landed in Japan's exclusive economic zone; however, the most recent missiles did not. Japan and South Korea have both expressed concern about North Korea's current actions, and are reaching out to partners in Asia.

Following the missile launch, North Korea released a statement saying that the missiles were a test launch from its "super-large multi-rocket launcher" which it had previously tested on August 24th and September 10th. The statement also stated that the most recent launch was a test of the "continuous-fire system." South Korean defense officials announced that the missiles were launched with a 3-minute interval between them.

There is speculation that North Korea is using these most recent launches as a tactic to prod the U.S. into holding another round of serious denuclearization talks, as a way to garner economic relief. This seems unlikely though, as after significant progress was made at the October 5th meeting in Stockholm with U.S. negotiators, North Korea stated that it would not be involved in any more "sickening negotiations." They ended their trip to Stockholm rebuking the U.S. negotiators' offers to reconvene and discuss the issue more in the coming weeks.

The improving relationship between North Korea and South Korea has also stalled recently. The missile launches come after Kim Jong-un sent South Korean President Moon Jae-in a condolence letter regarding the passing of his mother. The letter was sent after negotiations between the two countries came to a halt, and it was seen as a possible new start after months of North Korea offering harsh criticisms over a failed economic deal with South Korea.

Japan has now turned to the ASEAN-plus-three meetings to look for support against North Korea, in light of these recent events. The Japanese government has grown increasingly worried, as South Korea and North Korea attempt to repair their relationship, especially as the Japan-South Korea relationship has soured over the question of economic reparations for the atrocities committed by the Japanese in the early 1900s. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe used the ASEAN meetings to urge the other countries that had diplomatic relations with the North Koreans to help him meet "without conditions" so that Japan could make a breakthrough in the case of the Pyongyang abductions of Japanese nationals – though this did follow a strong condemnation of the North Korean missile launches as well.

Many western countries have conceded that the North Koreans violated U.N. Security Council resolutions against them; however, no immediate action has been taken by countries to address that violation. Japan has campaigned the ASEAN countries to implement U.N. sanctions against North Korea, in order to promote the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, but no actions have been taken as of now.