

[ColKurtz](#)

(radical)

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📖 US test follows N Korea missiles

THE US and Japan successfully tested the first product of their joint ballistic missile defence program yesterday, the day after a surprise North Korean missile launch caused confusion and anxiety in the neighbourhood.

Two short-range missiles were launched from North Korea's east coast on Wednesday, prompting an initial report the firings were accidental and had landed near the Chinese border.

However, White House and South Korean officials said yesterday the launches had been deliberate and were probably improved local versions of the Soviet SS-21 surface-to-surface weapons, aimed eastwards. At least one landed in the Sea of Japan, the South Koreans said.

White House spokesman Scott McClellan said the incident highlighted the dangers of Pyongyang's extensive missile development program and the need for the US and its allies to develop a western Pacific ballistic missile defence system.

"We have consistently pointed out that North Korea's missile program is a concern that poses a threat to the region and the larger international community," he said.

"We work closely with our allies in the region on ballistic missile defence and to maintain a strong deterrent against the threat North Korea poses."

But South Korean military sources said the launches were "part of annual (North Korean military) training around this time of every year" and did not breach North Korea's 1999 undertaking to discontinue ballistic missile tests.

North Korea's launch of a multi-stage, Taepodong-1 ballistic missile over northern Japan and into the Pacific in 1998 shocked the previously reluctant Japanese into co-operating with the US on missile defence development.

The Japanese Government agreed last year to extend the program from experimental to developmental and the US Defence Department announced yesterday the successful first test of a jointly developed ballistic missile defence system.

The test of a sea-launched, Standard Missile-3 interceptor, tipped with a Japanese-developed "clam-shell" nose cone, happened off Hawaii's Kauai island yesterday morning.

The new nose cone allows the SM-3 to fire a "killer" kinetic warhead at an approaching ballistic missile without having to manoeuvre into position.

The SM-3 is deployed on Aegis combat system destroyers that are the front line of the two-stage US and Japanese missile defence plan. Australia has also committed to buying the Aegis system, though it has yet to say which variant it wants.

The threat of North Korean intermediate and long-range ballistic missiles is one of the major motivations for Washington urging Pacific allies to join the missile defence program.

The commander of US forces in Korea, Burwell Bell, told a congressional committee earlier this week the North Koreans would probably soon deploy a new intermediate-range missile capable of striking Japan's Okinawa territory and US targets in Guam and Alaska.

General Bell said the US believed the North Koreans were continuing to work on a three-stage version of the Taepodong-2 missile that could strike the US. The estimated range of 15,000km would bring Australian cities within range, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer noted in mid-2004.

[ColKurtz](#) writes: *"new intermediate-range missile capable of striking Japan's Okinawa territory and US targets in Guam and Alaska.-*

And we are worried about Iran when NK will have the capability to hit US territory in the very near future. It's okay to threaten us just don't threaten Israel. The hypocrisy is there for the whole world to see when it comes to North Korea having nukes and Iran having nukes. If we can live with North Korea having nukes with the ability of striking US territory why can't we live with Iran having nukes when they don't have the ability to hit the US?"