NKorea launches ICBM in possibly its longest-range test yet

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) - After 2 ½ months of relative peace, North Korea launched its most powerful weapon yet early Wednesday, a presumed intercontinental ballistic missile that could put Washington and the entire eastern U.S. seaboard within range.

Resuming its torrid testing pace in pursuit of its goal of a viable arsenal of nuclear-tipped missiles that can hit the U.S. mainland had been widely expected, but the apparent power and suddenness of the new test still jolted the Korean Peninsula and Washington. The launch at 3:17 a.m. local time and midday in the U.S. capital indicated an effort to perfect the element of surprise and to obtain maximum attention in the United States.

The firing is a clear message of defiance aimed at the Trump administration, which had just restored the North to a U.S. list of terror sponsors. It also ruins nascent diplomatic efforts, raises fears of war or a pre-emptive U.S. strike and casts a deeper shadow over the security of the Winter Olympics early next year in South Korea.

A rattled Seoul responded by almost immediately launching three of its own missiles in a show of force. The South's president, Moon Jae-in, expressed worry that North Korea's growing missile threat could force the United States to attack the North before it masters a nuclear-tipped longrange missile, something experts say may be imminent.

'If North Korea completes a ballistic missile that could reach from one continent to another, the situation can spiral out of control," Moon said at an emergency meeting in Seoul, according to his office. "We must stop a situation where North Korea miscalculates and threatens us with nuclear weapons or where the United States considers a pre-emptive strike."

Moon, a liberal who has been forced into a more hawkish stance by a stream of North Korean weapons tests, has repeatedly declared that there can be no U.S. attack on the North without Seoul's approval, but many here worry that Washington may act without South Korean input.

The launch is North Korea's first since it fired an intermediate-range missile over Japan on Sept. 15, and may have broken any efforts at diplomacy meant to end the North's nuclear ambitions. U.S. officials have sporadically floated the idea of direct talks with North



A man watches a TV screen showing a local news program reporting North Korea's missile launch at the Seoul Train Station in Seoul, South Korea, Wednesday. North Korea abruptly ended a 10-week pause in its weapons testing by launching what the Pentagon said was an intercontinental ballistic missile, apparently its longest-range test yet, a move that will escalate already high tensions with Washington. The Korean letters read "Fired ballistic missile."

"Diplomatic options remain viable and open, for now."

- Rex Tillerson, U.S. Secretary of State

Korea if it maintained restraint. The missile also appears to improve on North Korea's past

If flown on a standard trajectory, instead of Wednesday's lofted angle, the missile would have a range of more than 8,100 miles, said U.S. scientist David Wright, a physicist who closely tracks North Korea's missile and nuclear programs. "Such a missile would have more than enough range to reach Washington, D.C., and in fact any part of the continental United States," Wright wrote in a blog post for the Union for Concerned

Japanese Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera said the missile landed inside of Japan's special economic zone in the Sea of Japan, about 155 miles west of Aomori, which is on the northern part of Japan's main island of Honshu. Onodera says the missile could have been an upgraded version of North Korea's Hwasong-14 ICBM or a new missile.

A big unknown, however, is the missile's payload. If, as expected, it carried a light mock warhead, then its effective range would have been shorter, analysts said.

An intercontinental ballistic missile test is considered particularly provocative, and indications that it flew higher than past launches suggest progress by Pyongyang in developing a weapon of mass destruction that could strike the U.S. mainland. President Donald Trump has vowed to prevent North Korea from having that capability — using military force if necessary.

In response to the launch, Trump said the United States will "take care of it." He told reporters after the launch: "It is a situation that we will handle." He did not elaborate.

Pentagon spokesman Col. Rob Manning said the missile was launched from Sain Ni, North Korea, and traveled about 620 miles before landing in the Sea of Japan within 200 nautical miles of Japan's coast. It flew for 53 minutes, Japan's defense minister said.

South Korea's responding missile tests included one with a 620-mile range, to mimic striking the North Korea launch site, which is not far from the North Korean

The U.N. Security Council scheduled an emergency meeting for Wednesday afternoon at the request of Japan, the U.S. and South Korea.

Italy's U.N. Ambassador Sebastiano Cardi, the current Security Council president, told reporters late Tuesday that "it's certainly very worrying. Everybody was hoping that there would be restraint from the regime."

He said the latest and toughest sanctions resolutions against North Korea "are working, having an effect on the situation ... on the capacity of the regime to obtain hard currency because to go along with the military programs or missile or nuclear (programs) you need money, and that's the objec-

"There is still room for new measures, but for the moment ... we don't know what the council decision will be," he said.

Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the missile flew higher than previous projectiles.

"It went higher, frankly, than any previous shot they've taken," he told reporters at the White House. "It's a research and development effort on their part to continue building ballistic missiles that can threaten everywhere in the world."

A week ago, the Trump administration declared North Korea a state sponsor of terrorism, further straining ties between governments that are still technically at war. Washington also imposed new sanctions on North Korean shipping firms and Chinese trading companies dealing with the North.

North Korea called the terror designation a "serious provocation" that justifies its development of nuclear weapons.

Kim Dong-yub, a former South Korean military official who is now an analyst at Seoul's Institute for Far Eastern Studies, said the early flight data suggests the North Korean missile was likely a Hwasong-14, which the North fired twice in July. The North is likely trying to further evaluate the weapon's performance, including the warhead's ability to survive atmospheric re-entry and strike the intended target, before it attempts a test that shows the full range of the missile.

South Koreans are famously nonchalant about North Korea's military moves, but there is worry about what the North's weapons tests might mean for next year's Winter Olympics in the South. President Moon told his officials to closely review whether the launch could in anyway hurt South Korea's efforts to successfully host the games in Pyeongchang, which begin Feb. 9.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who spoke with Trump, said Japan will not back down against any provocation and would maximize pressure on the North in its strong alliance with the U.S.

Trump has ramped up economic and diplomatic pressure on the North to prevent its nuclear and missile development. So far, the pressure has failed to get North Korea's government, which views a nuclear arsenal as key to its survival, to return to long-stalled international negotiations on its nuclear program.

Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said in a statement that North "indiscriminately Korea was threatening its neighbors, the region and global stability." He urged the international community to not only implement existing U.N. sanctions on North Korea but also to consider additional measures for interdicting maritime traffic transporting goods to and from the country.

"Diplomatic options remain viable and open, for now," Tillerson said, adding the U.S. remains committed to "finding a peaceful path to denuclearization and to ending belligerent actions by North Korea.'

resign after new accusations with trip to Asia, France

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former staffer to John Conyers says the Michigan congressman made unwanted sexual advances that included partially undressing in front of her in a hotel room and inappropriate touching, prompting more calls for the longest-serving member of the House

Deanna Maher, 77, who ran a Michigan office for Conyers from 1997 to 2005, told The Associated Press Tuesday that the first incident occurred in 1997 during a three-day Congressional Black Caucus event in Washington, which she said she "felt honored" to attend.

Maher said while she was in the bedroom of a hotel suite, Convers walked in, called room service and ordered sandwiches.

"I had my nightclothes on," said Maher, who now lives in the Holland area in western Michigan. "I was just scared to death. I was married at the time. He sat in the bedroom taking his clothes off. I didn't say anything and he didn't say anything."

Judge sides with Trump's pick to take over agency

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump scored a victory Tuesday when a federal judge refused to block the president's choice to temporarily run the nation's top consumer financial watchdog and, for the moment, ended a two-way battle for leadership of the agency.

Judge Timothy Kelly declined to stop the Republican president from putting Mick Mulvaney in place as the acting director of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. In doing so, Kelly ruled against Leandra English, the bureau's deputy director, who had requested a restraining order to stop Mulvaney from becoming acting director.

Mulvaney and English had claimed to be the rightful acting director, each citing different federal laws. The leadership crisis developed over the weekend after the bureau's permanent director, Richard Cordray, resigned and appointed English as his successor. Shortly afterward, the White House announced that Mulvaney, currently budget director, would take over the bureau on an interim basis.

The judge's ruling Tuesday is not the final decision in the case. But in making his decision, the judge said that English had not shown a substantial likelihood that she eventually would succeed on the merits of

The judge was nominated by Trump and was confirmed by the majority-Republican Senate in September.

More pressure on Convers to Obama re-emerges to world

WASHINGTON (AP) - Now a private citizen, former President Barack Obama re-emerged on the global stage Tuesday as he opened a three-country tour that includes meetings with the leaders of China and India, just as President Donald Trump courts those same world powers.

During a five-day trip, Obama will mix paid speeches with foreign leader meetings and even a town hall event for young people, the signature event that Obama became known for around the world during his eight years in office. He'll finish the trip in France, where he'll give one of several speeches planned during the trip.

The tour continues a longstanding

tradition of former U.S. presidents traveling overseas after leaving office, especially as they work to attract donations and other support for their foundations, libraries and presidential centers. But Obama's trip may garner particular attention, given that many foreign countries are still uncertain about Trump's foreign policy and may look to his predecessor to help explain America's current direction.

Powell says he favors loosening bank regulations

WASHINGTON (AP) — Jerome Powell, President Donald Trump's pick to be chairman of the Federal Reserve, told senators at his confirmation hearing Tuesday that he believes some bank regulations can be rolled back — something the administration and Wall Street favor. But he stressed that he will protect the central bank's political independence, calling it vital for the Fed's role.

Powell also strongly hinted in his appearance before the Senate Banking Committee that the Fed would hike rates again in December.

Powell said he believed that the Dodd-Frank Act, passed in the wake of the devastating 2008 financial crisis, had succeeded in making the financial system stronger, including ensuring that no major institution now is too big to fail.

But in some areas such as regulation of smaller banks, the law had imposed unnecessary burdens that should be eased, he said.

Powell's comments pleased many GOP senators, who have complained for years that Dodd-Frank was hurting the economic recovery by making it harder to get bank loans. Democratic senators, however, pressed Powell to say whether he would cut key consumer protections in the 2010 law, a measure that Trump often attacked.

