

## **Japan: N. Korea missile landed 'in target zone' outside economic zone**

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**TOKYO** : The Japanese government increasingly believes a missile North Korea launched Wednesday was intentionally fired at a higher-than-usual trajectory to shorten the distance it traveled, and that the missile came down roughly on target in an area of the Sea of Japan.

"We can't deny North Korea's technological development is progressing," Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Koichi Hagiuda said at a press conference Thursday. "This is an unpredictable situation."

The first missile North Korea launched Wednesday failed, but the second - believed to be a Musudan intermediate-range ballistic missile - reached an altitude of more than 1,000 kilometers, which is significantly higher than an altitude of about 600 kilometers it would reach if on a normal trajectory. The missile came down about 400 kilometers from the launch site.

The missile plunged into the sea outside Japan's exclusive economic zone. "It's very likely the missile was aimed and fired on that path so it wouldn't affect Japanese fishing vessels and other ships," a government source told The Yomiuri Shimbun.

The state-run Korean Central News Agency reported Thursday that the missile had "accurately landed in the targeted waters."

The Musudan is thought to have a maximum range of 3,000 kilometers to 4,000 kilometers. All of Japan is within range of this missile, as is Guam, where the U.S. military stations B-52 strategic bombers capable of carrying nuclear weapons. "If the missile is fired on a normal trajectory, it has the ability to reach Guam," an expert said.

According to Defense Ministry sources, the Musudan can fly faster than the Rodong midrange ballistic missile that Pyongyang developed previously, which had a range of about 1,300 kilometers. If Japan were to be targeted by the faster Musudan, there is concern that SM3 missiles and other defense mechanisms might not be able to intercept the incoming missile.

At a meeting Wednesday evening, the National Security Council confirmed it would accelerate development of the next-generation SM3 Block IIA missiles being jointly produced by the Japanese and U.S. governments.

An intercept order issued to the Self-Defense Forces on Tuesday in preparation for North Korea's ballistic missile launch was lifted by the government Thursday.

- Chicago Tribune