

FAA briefly grounded flights in Western U.S. as ‘precaution’ due to North Korea tested missile

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The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said Jan. 12 that it briefly paused departures at some West Coast airports Monday evening, a precaution that occurred near the same time as a North Korean ballistic missile launch.

It's unclear if the two events were connected.

The FAA said on Tuesday it “regularly takes precautionary measures. We are reviewing the process around this ground stop as we do after all such events.”

A U.S. official told Reuters the FAA paused operations for less than 15 minutes “due to initial reports of events in the Indo-Pacific region,” without directly tying it to the missile launch.

In a statement Monday evening, the U.S. military's Indo-Pacific Command, the geographic combatant command responsible for the region, confirmed North Korea's ballistic missile launch.

“We are aware of the ballistic missile launch and are consulting closely with our allies and partners. While we have assessed that this event does not pose an immediate threat to U.S. personnel or territory, or to our allies, the missile launch highlights the destabilizing impact of the DPRK's illicit weapons program,” the command wrote, referencing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Monday's missile test, the second known North Korean launch in a week, originated from the northern province of Jagang and traveled some 430 miles before plunging into the East Sea, according to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Last week, Pyongyang said it successfully conducted a test of a sophisticated hypersonic missile.

Meanwhile, Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said Monday that the U.S. was still assessing whether that test was of a hypersonic missile with a maneuverable warhead.

Under U.N. Security Council resolutions all ballistic missile tests by North Korea are banned.

The missile tests, which follow a series of weapons tests in 2021, underscore third-generation North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's ambition to expand military capabilities amid stalled nuclear talks with the United States.

Under his rule, the reclusive state has conducted its most powerful nuclear test, launched its first-ever intercontinental ballistic missile and threatened to send missiles into the waters near the U.S. territory of Guam.

Amanda Macias www.cnn.com

