

# COMPARATIVE

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## C O N N E C T I O N S

A TRIANNUAL E-JOURNAL OF BILATERAL  
RELATIONS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

US-KOREA RELATIONS

## RIGHT WHERE WE LEFT IT

MASON RICHEY, HANKUK UNIVERSITY  
ROB YORK, PACIFIC FORUM

The first reporting period of 2024 US-Korea relations was busy, both with managing ongoing issues (good and bad) and adapting to genuinely new evolutionary turns in US-Korea affairs. Concerning the former, US-South Korea relations continued on the same trajectory since President Yoon Suk Yeol assumed office in 2022: deepening bilateral alliance interoperability, enriching trilateral cooperation with Japan, increasing economic security policy convergence with the US. And this despite new foreign, defense, finance, and trade ministers in Seoul. Widely viewed as a referendum on Yoon, [April National Assembly elections](#) cast a shadow over much of his foreign and security policy during the reporting period. However, the crushing defeat of Yoon’s conservative People Power Party is unlikely to affect his approach to external affairs, where the president retains significant unilateral power. The “management” bucket also contains more threatening scenarios that have been building for months, years, decades. At the top of the list in importance is North Korea’s build-out of its nuclear and missile program, which continued apace in the January-April 2024 period, also providing more evidence of the essential hopelessness of international sanctions.

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This is connected to—albeit distinct from—the reflorescence of Pyongyang-Moscow relations. Government and open source intelligence reports throughout early 2024 demonstrate continued [massive North Korean arms sales](#) to support Russia’s war against Ukraine. Beyond financial, food, and energy assistance, the Kim Jong Un regime’s compensation for these transfers is unclear, but the possibilities are all menacing: international diplomatic cover for malign behavior, military satellite technology assistance, missile program assistance, etc. North Korea’s continued refusal to engage with the US diplomatically adds to the danger via greater misperception during potential crises. Given this threat environment, the [re-igniting in February](#) of discussion in South Korea regarding nuclear weapons development—one year after the Washington Declaration was supposed to put the issue to rest—represents another management headache for the US.

Finally, the January-April 2024 period also included substantial evolution in US-Korea affairs. Notably, North Korea [debuted a new policy line](#) denoting South Korea as an “enemy,” “implacably hostile” state no longer subject to attempts at “peaceful unification.” This was followed by numerous legal/bureaucratic/administrative and on-the-ground changes (including mining inter-Korean connector roads in the DMZ) to demonstrate resolve. North Korea’s historically official position that unification should be achieved through “peaceful” means may have always been a fiction, but words have meaning, and these changes indicate that North Korea is priming for a fight by codifying the right to destroy South Korea and South Korean citizens as though they are any other enemy and not consanguines. This is not just an inter-Korean issue, as the tension inherent in this position has downstream effects on the US-South Korea alliance.

In the international sphere, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Panel of Experts (PoE) was [formally dissolved](#) consequent to a Russian UNSC veto—likely in-kind payment for North Korea’s weapons largesse. This devolving of concerted international action seemingly brings an end to a period in which there was at least a fig-leaf of major-power agreement on monitoring North Korean sanctions evasion.

## **US-South Korea Relations: Two Is Better Than One... and Three is Better Than Two**

The initial reporting period in 2024 US-South Korea relations was marked by the domestic weakness of President Yoon Suk Yeol. He ordered a [re-shuffle](#) of key foreign, security/defense, intelligence, and economy cabinet officials in late 2023 and into early 2024. Following Shin Won-sik’s assumption of the defense minister post in late 2023, Ahn Duk-gun (trade minister), Choi Sang-mok (finance minister), Cho Tae-yong (national intelligence director), Chang Ho-jin (national security advisor), and Cho Tae-yul (foreign minister) all took new positions in January 2024.

This was no anodyne re-shuffle, but an (expected) attempt at breathing new life into Yoon’s external relations portfolio ahead of his party challenging for a majority in April National Assembly elections. Yoon—never politically popular, and increasingly surrounded by scandals—hoped that the changes would flip the political script while still providing policy continuity. The latter has largely been the case, despite the new team handling the highest affairs of defense, security, intelligence, and international economic relations (the latter of which are themselves increasingly connected to security) during a tricky period. US-South Korea alliance relations remain strong, trilateral cooperation with Japan is gaining in maturity, Seoul and Beijing continue to seek a stable equilibrium with difficulty, and economic security choices are sharpening. Despite the continuity, Seoul seems to use the “Global Pivotal State” slogan less than under Foreign Minister Cho’s predecessor, Park Jin, a smooth-tongued diplomat beloved by South Korea’s allies and friends abroad, who hope that the receding slogan does not portend a receding South Korea.



Figure 1 Lee Jae-myung (C), head of the main opposition Democratic Party and a candidate in the Gyeyang-B district in Incheon, 27 kilometers west of Seoul, is at his election office on April 11, 2024 Photo: Yonhap

The re-shuffle did not improve Yoon's favorability or the electoral fortunes of the conservative People Power Party (PPP). Despite being gifted with an allegedly corrupt opposition in disarray, a series of remarkable domestic [political gaffes](#) and [scandals](#) led Yoon and the PPP to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, [going down in flames](#) in the April election. The results were not close: the progressive coalition led by the Democratic Party arriving at 188 seats and the PPP and its affiliate with a paltry 108 (out of 300 total seats). This huge majority gives the progressives numerous levers to make Yoon and the PPP miserable, including fast-track legislative authority and the ability to launch investigations into corruption and malfeasance of those surrounding Yoon. Yoon will be the first South Korean president to never have a legislative majority, and excepting essential legislation (e.g., budget) for which there is precedent for bipartisan action, he is likely to spend most of the rest of his term using his pen to veto opposition legislation and sign executive orders. Moreover, with a 2027 presidential election looming and the South Korean president term-limited to one five-year mandate, Yoon will face impending lame-duck status within his own party.

The good news for Yoon—such as it is—is that the South Korean presidency has very strong levers of power for foreign, defense, and security policy. He will thus be incentivized to focus as much (or even more) of his energies in those areas than before. Yoon is—infamously—allergic to changing course (this stubbornness

undermined his party dramatically in the legislative elections), so one should expect that Yoon's efforts in the foreign, defense, and security policy space will largely continue along the same path: strengthening the US-South Korea alliance, deepening trilateral security cooperation with the US and Japan, navigating the challenges of a shifting regional/global economic security landscape.

The strength of the US-South Korea alliance is most evident in combined military exercises, which have accelerated throughout Yoon's term in office. The first four months of 2024 continued the trend, with the US and South Korea carrying out their [annual Freedom Shield exercises](#), including live-fire air-assault drills (which North Korea [attempted to disrupt](#) through navigation jamming) and a US-South Korea [nuclear table-top exercise](#) incorporated in the US-South Korea Korea-Integrated Defense Dialogue (held concurrently in Washington with *Freedom Shield*). Beyond the normally scheduled joint training, the US and South Korea fulfilled Washington Declaration commitments to engage in frequent bilateral military exercise scenarios, including several joint air drills (featuring [high-end assets such as the F35](#)), [airborne assault](#) exercises, and [joint space](#) conflict training. On two occasions, US marines [rotated](#) on to the Peninsula to train with South Korean counterparts at high-tech live-fire sites. Seoul also sent military personnel and assets to participate in US-led [multinational](#) submarine and air exercises off Guam, as well as at the annual [Cobra Gold](#) exercises in Thailand.

Arguably the most important recent development in US-South Korea military exercises has been their increasing trilateralization with Japan following the August 2023 Camp David summit. The rhythm of US-South Korea-Japan military exercises across air and sea domains continued at a heightened pace during the January-April 2024 period. Already in January, the three states held [combined naval drills](#) to shore up interoperability and underscore trilateral deterrence against North Korea following Pyongyang's launch of a hypersonic missile. Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo responded to an April ballistic missile launch by North Korea via (inter alia) [joint air maneuvers](#) including strategic assets such as B-52 bombers.

And in mid-April, the US-South Korea-Japan combined militaries [conducted naval exercises](#) involving a US aircraft carrier. Unlike the other two drills, this exercise in interoperability was long-planned as a part of ongoing routinization of trilateral military collaboration to deter North Korea.

Beyond military exercises toward interoperability and combined deterrence, trilateralism was visible in other areas also. Unsurprisingly, many trilateral meetings and statements concerned North Korea in some way. As has become increasingly frequent, US, South Korean, and Japanese diplomats and senior officials often [coordinated messages](#) to underscore a combined front in pushing back against North Korea. On multiple occasions, the three countries' special envoys, foreign ministers, defense ministers, and others met to discuss responses to North Korean malign behavior (missile launches, cybercrime, sanctions evasion), producing public statements of a unified stance. The first trimester of 2024 also marked the start of a year of Washington-South Korea-Japan overlap at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), another venue in which US diplomats coordinated on North Korea issues. This was especially evident as the UN Panel of Experts (PoE) monitoring North Korean sanctions evasion was [terminated due to a Russian veto](#) at the UNSC, leading the [US, South Korea, and Japan](#) to call for the [establishment of a multinational watchdog](#) to take over the task.



Figure 2 UN members call for a multinational alternative to the PoE. Photo: KBS World

The fate of the PoE was not a bolt from the blue: Russia had been telegraphing the possibility of

terminating it, a formal nail in the sanctions enforcement coffin informally hewn by Moscow's rampant sanctions-busting trade with North Korea since at least 2019. Moscow likely considered the PoE termination an in-kind payment for the thousands of containers of weapons Pyongyang shipped to Russia to support the war effort in Ukraine. This malign tie-up was also a subject of [coordinated trilateral naming-and-shaming](#) at senior official level on multiple occasions. Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo are genuinely concerned that North Korean artillery and ballistic missile shipments to Russia will make a meaningful (if likely marginal) difference in Russia's ability to advance its military objectives, further undermining the international rules-based order. Additionally, all three allies—and especially South Korea—are worried about the military technological assistance flowing in the other direction also, allowing North Korea to grow its weapons and (possibly) military intelligence satellite programs.

Finally, as concerns US-South Korea-Japan trilateral cooperation, the January-April 2024 period announced new developments and the growth of continuing trends. As for the former, the three allies announced plans to work together on [collective quantum computing competitiveness](#), as well as [supply chain security](#). Regarding the latter, both US President Joe Biden and NATO leadership announced plans to [invite](#) President Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida to the NATO summit in Washington in July, which may lead to a trilateral summit on the sidelines.

Of course, a trilateral with Japan requires a solid US-South Korea core, which got the usual workout during the first trimester of 2024. Washington and Seoul made all the standard bilateral diplomatic statements [condemning](#) North Korean malfeasance (missile launches, etc.), and showed increasing [urgency](#) in doing so against Moscow-Pyongyang military cooperation in the context of the Ukraine war (as discussed above). Venues for this condemnation included both NATO (where South Korea is a Global Partner) and the UNSC (where South Korea began a two-year nonpermanent member period in January).



Economic cooperation—notably in areas related to economic/technological security, export controls, and other “de-risking” approaches to China—was another major (if uneasy) field of development in US-South Korea alliance relations during the first trimester of 2024. At the end of April, the US-led Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) finally [entered into force](#) in South Korea. The US also announced in April that South Korea’s Samsung Corporation would receive [\\$6.4 billion in grants](#) supporting its [\\$40 billion](#) chipmaking investment in Texas. SK Hynix [began delivering](#) fifth-generation high-bandwidth chips to fabless NVIDIA and [announced](#) a \$4 billion chip packaging plant in Indiana. Top US and Korean business leaders met also, as Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg [visited Korea](#) (Samsung in particular), and GM [discussed a tie-up](#) with Samsung in areas of electric vehicle batteries. The flip side of cooperation is [constraint](#), however, and South Korea [voiced concern](#) on a number of US-led initiatives, such as export controls on semiconductors and IRA-based [sourcing rules](#) on critical minerals for electric vehicle batteries. In both cases, South Korea continued to press for greater US flexibility in interpretation and timing of certain measures that Seoul argues are unrealistic or draconian.

Various and sundry other occasions also presented themselves for US-South Korea interaction. Washington and Seoul [pushed forward](#) on joint cyber policy against North Korean cyber threats, including combined [cyber drills](#). Seoul’s hosting of the [Summit for Democracy](#) allowed the US and South Korea to reinforce rhetorical commitment to shared values in politics, and January featured [statements from top Washington-Seoul diplomats](#) on the importance of stability in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait (it remains to be seen if South Korea will continue its rhetorical adventurousness vis-à-vis China ahead of a possible [China-Japan-South Korea summit](#) in Seoul in late May). President Biden’s hosting of Japanese Prime Minister Kishida for a state visit in April occasioned increased discussion the role of “minilateral” networks in the Indo-Pacific, including possible [AUKUS pillar 2](#) (AI, quantum computing, etc.) participation by Japan and South Korea. South Korea, under Yoon at least, is certainly showing interest, as it [reiterated the possibility](#) at the South Korea-Australia 2+2 in

April. On the cultural diplomacy front, two Major League Baseball (MLB) teams—the Los Angeles Dodgers and San Diego Padres—[visited Seoul and successfully held both exhibition games](#) with local South Korean teams and two regulation MLB games to start the regular season.

Of course, not all is perfect in the US-South Korea alliance. The US presidential election in November is looming, and South Korea—especially the Yoon administration, which has worked so well with Biden—is [worried](#) about the possible return to office of Donald Trump. Trump is famously dismissive of and ignorant about alliances in general and the US-South Korea alliance in particular, structures bilateral relationships as transactional, cares not about values other than “Trump First” and “America First,” and openly solicits dictators (including North Korea’s Kim Jong Un), among other international political vices. Most South Koreans have a dim [view](#) of Trump’s approach to the Korean Peninsula during the 2016–2021 period, so the prospect of his re-election prompted Yoon administration attempts at prophylactic measures starting in 2024. For instance, Yoon (and Biden) instructed teams to begin re-negotiating the [Special Measures Agreement](#) (SMA, South Korean funding for the US military presence in South Korea) ahead of schedule to hopefully have a deal on the way before Trump would be able to use the SMA as a cudgel threatening the alliance. Yoon, Biden, and Kishida continued work from last fall to “lock-in” trilateral cooperation, making it tougher for Trump to kill it.

But history doesn’t repeat, it rhymes, and Trump 2.0 could be very different from Trump 1.0. For one thing, he is likely to have a large number of relatively unknown advisors around him, in part because so many former Trump officials refuse to work for him again. This has a practical consequence: Yoon-adjacent experts and government think-tank affiliated analysts now incorporate stops at Trump-friendly think-tanks and political organizations in Washington during their travels to the US, mostly to bank access to potential future Trump 2.0 officials.

Lastly, the prospect of Trump 2.0 has re-ignited the South Korea nuclear weapons debate. Trump held an end April/early May [Time interview](#), in which he again placed [transactional conditions](#)

on US willingness to keep troops on the peninsula and defend South Korea. Christopher Miller, Trump's final (acting) secretary of defense and possible appointee for the position for Trump 2.0, [gave an interview](#) toying with the idea of pulling some troops off the Peninsula. Elbridge Colby, another former Trump senior official and possible major security and defense player in a new Trump administration, [all but encouraged](#) South Korea to develop nuclear weapons given constraints on US military resources and the need focus them on China. The threat of abandonment—even if negligible—cannot be overstated in terms of its clarifying effect on South Korea strategic elites, who fret that international disorder from Ukraine and the Middle East could incentivize North Korea and China to engage in highly risk-tolerant behavior. Were the US not to meet its extended deterrence commitments, South Korea could be looking at catastrophe. Consequently, South Koreans, both elites and the public (which remains [60–70% in favor](#)), have begun to again discuss South Korean nuclear weapons acquisition, a discussion that quieted after the 2023 Washington Declaration and the introduction of the Nuclear Consultative Group. In February, President Yoon himself brought up the possibility (albeit to brush it away *for the moment*). A late April CSIS [elite survey](#) showed that 34% are in favor of developing nuclear weapons (66% reject the option), but that the percentage supporting indigenous South Korean nuclear weapons jumps to 51% if the US appears to fail in its security commitments, such as via withdrawing soldiers from the Peninsula.

### US-North Korea Relations: You Need to Calm Down

As with the last reporting period, the US spent much of the first four months of 2024 dealing with the ramifications of North Korea's increasing alignment with Russia, specifically Pyongyang's provision of munitions for Moscow's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. While there was not a repeat of Kim Jong Un's September 2023 meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, high-level [meetings](#) between Russian and North Korean officials have continued, and CSIS Beyond Parallel [reported](#) in late February that starting in August 2023 more than two dozen different visits to Najin, North Korea, took place for the provision of munitions

destined for Russian use against Ukraine. Furthermore, nearly 20 “dark vessels”—vessels with their AIS transmissions turned off to avoid outside detection—visited Vostochny Port in Russia in that time. The result: more than 2.5 million rounds of artillery shells and other munitions to Russia. As of May 2024, the US government estimates that Pyongyang has provided at least [10,000 containers](#) of munitions to Moscow, and evidence of the use of North Korean artillery shells and ballistic missiles in the field is [confirmed by open source intelligence](#). The closer coordination between these two, plus their relations with China and Iran (an “axis of upheaval,” as our Regional Overview authors call it), leaves officials such as the head of US Strategic Command [concerned](#) about “simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed adversaries.” At the very least, North Korea is likely getting various forms of financial, energy, food, and technical assistance from Russia in exchange for weapons transfers, in addition to [intelligence about the performance](#) of some of its arsenal (although there are questions about [high failure rate](#) and whether North Korea has shipped low-quality arms to Russia).



Figure 3 Putin and Choe. Photo: Yonhap

With limited options to halt the exchanges (thanks to Russia's veto power at the UNSC, inter alia) the US has addressed the collusion by [seeking to draw attention](#) to it (along with the [South Koreans](#)), [imposed sanctions](#) on those Russian entities instituting the exchanges, and led international efforts to condemn the attacks. This includes rallying [South Korean condemnation](#), as well as [NATO's](#) and (on [multiple](#) occasions) the [G7's](#). Beyond that, Washington tracks the [continued efforts](#) by the

North to simultaneously deepen its ties with Russia and China, and to prevent it, given that China's own "no limits" partnership with Russia has seemingly precluded provision of lethal aid. State officials have also said they have [tightened](#) sanctions to curb such exchanges, though what effect this has had is unclear.

It also says much about the deterioration of the international security space—thanks to the upheaval axis' activities—in the past two years that North Korea's continued testing activities remain under the radar, comparatively speaking. While Russia continues its offensives and attacks on Ukraine's infrastructure, Iran backs Hamas against Israel's efforts to dislodge it, and China continues to provoke the Philippines in the South China Sea, North Korea continues to methodically proliferate and prepare for conflict. This [includes](#) live-fire drills from its western coast, [tests](#) of hypersonic warheads (including from a solid-fuel IRBM), [several tests](#) of cruise missiles (including [ones](#) launched by submarine), and [guided](#) artillery firing drills simulating attacks on an "enemy's capital." As with the response to Russian arms, the US response appears consigned to [condemnation](#), sanctions, attempts to rally [international support](#) at the UNSC, and calls for "[serious and sustained](#)" diplomacy that are certain to be ignored.

For now the US [finds](#) no evidence of North Korean plans to take direct military action, although at the end of 2023 and throughout 2024 Pyongyang has consistently raised tensions by declaring South Korea an "enemy," and "implacably hostile" state (a topic dealt with in greater detail in the chapter on inter-Korean relations). Seoul is no longer a misguided "brother" requiring return to the fold, but rather a state open to annihilation and occupation like any other. Chairman Kim has consequently ordered the mining of inter-Korean connector roads, demanded that the military [prepare](#) its naval forces for war, and [called](#) for practical war drills in response to joint US-South Korea military exercises. The lack of inter-Korean hotlines and US-North Korea diplomacy makes possibilities for misperception greater. Thus the dire state of inter-Korean relations affects the US, as the increased likelihood of skirmishes (or even

crisis) tests US military strategy and readiness on the Peninsula.

Washington and Seoul can, for the moment, take small comfort in the fact that North Korea's capabilities do not seem to match intent, from its failed efforts to [jam US-South Korea navigation systems](#) during drills, to a lack of success in [hypersonic tests](#), and (more recently) reports that its missiles in Ukraine consistently [blow up mid-air or veer off course](#). That hostile intent, however, cannot be denied, and makes North Korea's shortcomings in capability only mildly less worrying.

Various odds and ends also marked US-North Korea relations in the first trimester of 2024. One peculiarity was Pyongyang's apparent (feigned?) [openness to diplomacy](#) with Tokyo. For a brief moment, Japan responded cautiously but positively, as did the US (perhaps interested in finding any way to get North Korea to engage), but then Kim Yo Jong conditioned potential talks on an unacceptable agenda, and the prospect seemed to evaporate. Was the call for talks genuine? A red-herring? An attempt to drive a wedge between the US, South Korea, and Japan? There was also some speculation that post-COVID North Korea might begin to [open back up](#) to European diplomatic delegations, perhaps as a precursor to a broader opening, but those hopes have also seemingly stagnated. With Pyongyang still largely closed off from the West, cooperating with Russia and China, and its weaponry and rhetorical hostility growing apace, Washington's options appear limited to trying to maintain deterrence and curtail the North's various means of defying sanctions, such as [cryptocurrency theft](#) and oil smuggling, through court [orders](#) and ad hoc multilateral [agreements](#).

### Conclusion: Cruel Summer?

What North Korea intends through its provocative measures has been widely debated among watchers of the Peninsula, with some [claiming](#) the "strategic" decision to go to war has already been made, and others stating the North is taking steps to win a war should one break out, but not actually seeking to provoke it. Others say such actions may instead be mere posturing ahead of the [US elections in the fall](#), after which Pyongyang might have a negotiating partner more to their liking. Assuming as much might be

dangerous, though, as the 2019 Hanoi summit showed Donald Trump to be less pliant than expected, while subsequent [correspondence](#) revealed that Kim took the summit's failure personally. It was this perceived "betrayal" that led him to change course in foreign policy, away from seeking reconciliation with Washington.

Kim can continue to maintain or even escalate his provocations, however, notably in the gray-zone, through the months to come in the hopes of undermining the standing of the incumbent administration. Even if it seems unlikely that Korean Peninsula security is the issue on which the US election will turn, supporters of a Trump presidency are fond of reminiscing about the relative lack of missile tests that took place between 2018 and 2021. Even if there is limited space for improved relations between the US and North Korea, there is plenty of room for relations between Washington and Seoul to deteriorate from their current highs—on [both](#) the [security](#) and economic fronts.

That might serve Kim Jong Un's purposes as well as another summit.



# CHRONOLOGY OF US-KOREA RELATIONS

## JANUARY – APRIL 2024

**Jan. 5, 2024:** US official [claims](#) that North Korea has sent several dozen ballistic missiles to Russia.

**Jan. 5, 2024:** Senior defense officials of South Korea and the United States strongly [condemn](#) North Korea's announcement to launch more spy satellites.

**Jan. 7, 2024:** A military source [says](#) North Korea is conducting live-fire drills from its western coast.

**Jan. 7, 2024:** South Korea's military [says](#) North Korea fires artillery off western coast for a third consecutive day.

**Jan. 10, 2024:** National security advisers of South Korea and the United States [condemn](#) "in the strongest possible terms" North Korea's transfer of ballistic missiles to Russia for use in Ukraine.

**Jan. 11, 2024:** South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik [says](#) North Korea may sell new types of tactical guided missiles to Russia in addition to its alleged supply of short-range ballistic missiles for Moscow's use in its ongoing war with Ukraine.

**Jan. 12, 2024:** Top diplomats of South Korea and the United States [agree](#) to work together to address North Korean threats and support peace in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

**Jan. 12, 2024:** United States [imposes](#) sanctions on three Russian entities (the Ashuluk Firing Range, 224th Flight Unit State Airlines, and the Vladimirovka Advanced Weapons and Research Complex) and one individual (Vladimir Mikheyichik, general director of 224th Flight Unit State Airlines) for their involvement in the transfer and testing of North Korean ballistic missiles for Russia's use against Ukraine.

**Jan. 15, 2024:** North Korea [says](#) it has successfully test-fired a solid-fuel intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) carrying a hypersonic warhead.

**Jan. 15, 2024:** United States [condemns](#) North Korea's ballistic missile launch as a violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions.

**Jan. 15, 2024:** North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui [arrives](#) in Russia for an official visit to further deepen military ties.

**Jan. 16, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [agree](#) to begin talks on their next deal on defense cost sharing earlier than planned, a move that appears to consider the possible reelection of former US President Donald Trump, known for his tough bargaining on such deals.

**Jan. 16, 2024:** South Korea [is to join](#) a US-led multinational anti-submarine exercise in waters off Guam in an effort to hone capabilities against underwater threats.

**Jan. 17, 2024:** Russian President Vladimir Putin [meets](#) with North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui amid deepening military cooperation between the two countries.

**Jan. 17, 2024:** US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan [expresses](#) worries about North Korean threats and other challenges, but stresses closer alliance cooperation.

**Jan. 17, 2024:** Joint Chiefs of Staff [says](#) that South Korea, the US, and Japan have jointly conducted naval drills in waters south of the Korean Peninsula following North Korea's recent launch of a hypersonic missile.

**Jan. 18, 2024:** Top nuclear envoys of South Korea, the US, and Japan [hold talks](#) in Seoul as tensions rise on the Korean Peninsula amid North Korea's belligerent rhetoric and deepening military cooperation with Russia.

**Jan. 18, 2024:** United States [warns](#) against North Korea's provision of additional military aid to Russia for use in Ukraine, as Pyongyang's top diplomat visits Moscow in an apparent sign of deepening bilateral ties.

**Jan. 18, 2024:** A senior Pentagon official [says](#) that the United States will take North Korea's military

space capability "seriously" amid concerns about Pyongyang's pursuit of space-based military capabilities.

**Jan. 18, 2024:** Top national security advisors of South Korea, the US, and Japan [sign](#) a trilateral quantum partnership to train a quantum workforce and strengthen their collective competitiveness in the field.

**Jan. 19, 2024:** Senior South Korean general [highlights](#) the need for international response and cooperation against North Korea's evolving military threats at a major gathering of top NATO military officials.

**Jan. 19, 2024:** UN Security Council (UNSC) [holds](#) closed-door consultations on North Korea-related issues amid tensions heightened by Pyongyang's recent launch of a claimed hypersonic missile and its hardening rhetoric against Seoul.

**Jan. 19, 2024:** North Korea [says](#) it has tested an underwater nuclear weapon system under development in response to the latest joint maritime exercise between South Korea, the United States and Japan.

**Jan. 19, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [hold](#) a working-level cyber policy meeting to bolster efforts against North Korea's growing threats in cyberspace.

**Jan. 22, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [discuss](#) ways to expand the participation of South Korean companies in the maintenance of US military equipment in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Jan. 22, 2024:** US surveillance aircraft [flies over](#) South Korea on an apparent mission to monitor North Korea following its claimed test of an underwater nuclear attack drone.

**Jan. 22, 2024:** Hyundai Motor [calls](#) on the US government to provide a temporary Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) exemption on a limited number of critical materials such as graphite, stating that not sourcing raw materials from China is "unrealistic" currently.

**Jan. 23, 2024:** South Korea's top envoy to the UN [renews](#) Seoul's criticism of arms transactions between North Korea and Russia during a UNSC meeting, as Russia's top diplomat shifts the

blame to the West for the prolonging of the war in Ukraine.

**Jan. 24, 2024:** North Korea [fires](#) several cruise missiles toward the Yellow Sea.

**Jan. 25, 2024:** North Korea [says](#) it has test-fired a new strategic cruise missile, named *Pulhwasal-3-31*, in what is seen as an effort to strengthen capabilities to deliver nuclear weapons.

**Jan. 25, 2024:** Chainalysis report [shows](#) that North Korea-linked hackers stole \$1 billion worth of crypto-currency through 20 attacks in 2023, the highest number of their hacks since record-keeping began in 2016.

**Jan. 25, 2024:** South Korea's top nuclear envoy [meets](#) NATO officials to discuss North Korea's provocations.

**Jan. 26, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [conduct](#) their first cyber security drills to bolster their joint posture against rising cyber threats.

**Jan. 27, 2024:** North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son-hui [meets](#) a senior Chinese diplomat in Pyongyang, as the North appears to be seeking to strengthen ties with Beijing amid stepped-up cooperation with Russia.

**Jan. 29, 2024:** United States [urges](#) North Korea to refrain from further "threatening" activity and engage in "serious and sustained" diplomacy, after Pyongyang fires several cruise missiles.

**Jan. 29, 2024:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [oversees](#) the test-fire of submarine-launched cruise missiles and reviews a project to build a nuclear-powered submarine.

**Jan. 29, 2024:** South Korea's military [says](#) it is putting weight on the possibility that North Korea's latest purported test of submarine-launched cruise missiles is "exaggerated."

**Jan. 30, 2024:** US Chamber of Commerce [expresses](#) concerns over South Korea's proposed regulations aimed at preventing unfair market activities by major online platform businesses such as Naver, Kakao, Google, and Apple.

**Jan. 30, 2024:** US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and the secretary general of the NATO [express](#) concerns over North Korea's export of military equipment to Russia for use in Ukraine.

**Jan. 30, 2024:** South Korean military [says](#) that North Korea has fired several cruise missiles off the west coast, just two days after it has test-fired submarine-launched cruise missiles from the east coast.

**Jan. 31, 2024:** South Korea [calls](#) for the United States to come up with "reasonable" regulations on limiting the sourcing of critical minerals and components from countries like China to qualify for US incentives for electric vehicles.

**Feb. 1, 2024:** Semiconductor Industry Association [calls](#) on the US government to craft multilateral chip equipment export controls, claiming the current unilateral ones put US firms at a disadvantage over rivals from South Korea and other countries.

**Feb. 2, 2024:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [calls](#) for strengthening the country's navy to step up war preparations and protect maritime sovereignty during a visit to a shipyard for warships.

**Feb. 2, 2024:** North Korea [fires](#) several cruise missiles off the west coast.

**Feb. 3, 2024:** North Korea [says](#) it has conducted what it calls a "cruise missile super-large warhead power test" and had test-fired a new-type of anti-aircraft missile.

**Feb. 4, 2024:** United States [finds](#) no indications of "direct" North Korean military action, pledging to make "relentless" efforts to deter and constrain evolving threats from the recalcitrant regime.

**Feb. 4, 2024:** South Korea's top naval officer [visits](#) a key naval submarine base in the United States for the first time and stresses the need to strengthen ties against growing North Korean threats.

**Feb. 7, 2024:** Head of the US auto giant General Motors [meets](#) with chiefs of Samsung Group affiliates to discuss cooperation in areas involving electric vehicle batteries and auto electric parts.

**Feb. 8, 2024:** President Yoon Suk Yeol [says](#) that South Korea can develop nuclear weapons in a short period of time if it decides to do so, but going nuclear is "unrealistic" because it would entail various economic sanctions.

**Feb. 8, 2024:** 2024 National Proliferation Financing Risk Assessment report [shows](#) that North Korea continues to engage in "malicious" cyber activities and mobilize information technology (IT) workers to bankroll its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs.

**Feb. 9, 2024:** South Korea [conducts](#) a US-led multinational air exercise, along with Japan, Australia, France and Canada, in Guam to enhance joint operability.

**Feb. 13, 2024:** Kim Sung-han, former South Korean national security advisor, [says](#) that South Korea is "open-minded" about Japan participating in a currently bilateral nuclear deterrence dialogue between Seoul and Washington.

**Feb. 14, 2024:** Former President Donald Trump's NATO remarks [renew](#) worries in Seoul about the US commitment to alliance amid growing North Korean threats.

**Feb. 14, 2024:** North Korea [fires](#) several cruise missiles off the east coast.

**Feb. 15, 2024:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [supervises](#) the test-firing of a new surface-to-sea missile and orders a tighter defense posture near the western maritime border.

**Feb. 15, 2024:** US National Security Advisor Sullivan [says](#) the National Security Council remains "fundamentally engaged" in a key South Korea-US nuclear deterrence dialogue platform.

**Feb. 15, 2024:** North Korea [releases](#) a barrage of harsh insults against Julie Turner, US special envoy for North Korean human rights, who is visiting Asia on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of a landmark UN report on the North's rights abuses, calling her a "human rights strangler" and "apostle of aggression."

**Feb. 15, 2024:** US Marines based in Okinawa [arrive](#) in South Korea to join an ongoing bilateral exercise with the South's Marines Corps amid efforts to boost readiness against North Korean threats.

**Feb. 15, 2024:** Kim Yo Jong, the sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, [says](#) that the regime is open to improving its relationship with Japan, including inviting the Japanese leader to Pyongyang.

**Feb. 16, 2024:** South Korean and US special envoys for North Korean human rights [hold](#) talks with activists to discuss ways to improve the rights situation in the reclusive country, urging solidarity on the matter so that the North Korean rights issue does not become a "forgotten crisis."

**Feb. 18, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [agree](#) to kick off a research campaign to uncover the cause of air pollution across Asia during the winter season as part of efforts to better address air quality challenges and come up with policies designed to improve air quality.

**Feb. 18, 2024:** Top diplomats of the G7 countries strongly [condemn](#) North Korea's arms transfers to Russia, calling it a direct violation of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions.

**Feb. 20, 2024:** Korean electric vehicle battery makers [insist](#) that the US government give at least a two-year grace period before enforcing regulations outlined in the IRA concerning battery materials, allowing for the discovery of new non-Chinese companies to source materials like graphite.

**Feb. 21, 2024:** CNN [reports](#) that a North Korean ballistic missile that Russia fired against Ukraine contained many parts traced to companies in the United States and Europe.

**Feb. 21, 2024:** United States [asks](#) China out about the possibility of a trilateral project to excavate and recover the remains of troops killed during the 1950-53 Korean War, raising the prospects for three-way humanitarian cooperation despite hardening Sino-US rivalry.

**Feb. 22, 2024:** Top diplomats of South Korea and Japan [agree](#) to continue bilateral cooperation to address North Korean issues during talks on the margins of a foreign ministerial gathering of the G20 in Brazil.

**Feb. 22, 2024:** North Korea [denounces](#) the United States over what it claims to be a "double standard" toward human rights issues, calling on the country's special envoy to visit the Middle East rather than "scheming" against the North.

**Feb. 23, 2024:** South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko [highlight](#) the importance of

trilateral coordination to respond to North Korea's provocative acts and its military support for Russia's war against Ukraine during their trilateral meeting on the margins of the foreign ministers' meeting of the G20 nations in Rio De Janeiro.

**Feb. 23, 2024:** United States [tightens](#) sanctions to prevent North Korea's supply of weapons and other materials to support Russia's war efforts.

**Feb. 23, 2024:** Senior US diplomat Bonnie Jenkins [says](#) that any North Korean nuclear attack against South Korea will be met with a "swift," "overwhelming" and "decisive" response.

**Feb. 23, 2024:** South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho is set to [visit](#) New York to attend a UNSC briefing.

**Feb. 23, 2024:** South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho [urges](#) G20 countries to play active roles in addressing escalating military threats from North Korea.

**Feb. 23, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [stage](#) joint air drills with advanced F-35A fighter jets amid joint efforts to strengthen deterrence against North Korean threats.

**Feb. 24, 2024:** US State Department [says](#) that North Korea has shipped over 10,000 containers of munitions or munition-related materials to Russia since September 2023, as Moscow strives to replenish its weapons stockpile for use in Ukraine.

**Feb. 24, 2024:** State Department [says](#) that the top nuclear envoys of the United States and China have held video talks to discuss North Korea's "destabilizing" behavior and its deepening military cooperation with Russia.

**Feb. 25, 2024:** Leaders of the G7 strongly [condemn](#) arms transactions between North Korea and Russia, as they mark the second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

**Feb. 27, 2024:** US diplomat Yuri Kim [expresses hopes](#) for South Korea to provide more defense material support to Ukraine, stressing the importance of air defense assistance for Ukrainian forces striving to fend off Russian attacks.



**Feb. 27, 2024:** US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo [says](#) that "tough" talks are under way with advanced semiconductor companies over grants to be awarded under a program to reinvigorate chip manufacturing in the United States.

**Feb. 27, 2024:** German delegation [visits](#) North Korea to inspect the country's embassy in Pyongyang, in what appears to be the first visit by European staff in four years, though Germany says it doesn't guarantee embassy reopening.

**Feb. 28, 2024:** Lael Brainard, a senior White House official, [portrays](#) South Korean enterprises operating in the United States as helping foster a robust supply chain ecosystem and create decent jobs.

**Feb. 28, 2024:** US Defense Department [starts](#) a process to solicit industry feedback on its pursuit of a defense procurement agreement with South Korea to allow easier access to each other's market amid growing security uncertainties from North Korean threats and other challenges.

**Feb. 28, 2024:** Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg [meets](#) Samsung Electronics Co. Chairman Lee Jae-yong and LG Electronics Co. CEO Cho Joo-wan to discuss ways to enhance corporate collaborations in the artificial intelligence and extended reality sectors.

**Feb. 28, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [plan](#) to launch annual joint military drills, as the allies seek to bolster joint readiness against evolving military threats from North Korea.

**Feb. 28, 2024:** Beyond Parallel [reports](#) that since August 2023, there have been at least 25 different visits to Najin for the loading of munitions from North Korea to be delivered to Russia, and, at least 19 "dark vessels"—vessels with their AIS transmissions turned off to avoid outside detection—have visited Vostochny Port in Russia to both unload and load containers from the port. These voyages have reportedly supported the transfer of more than 2.5 million rounds of artillery shells and other munitions.

**Feb. 28, 2024:** Defense chiefs of South Korea and the United States [vow](#) to sternly deal with North Korea's arms transfers to Russia in coordination with the international community.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho and the Secretary of State Blinken [hold](#) their first bilateral in-person meeting in Washington since Cho took office in January 2023, as the two countries strive to strengthen cooperation to counter evolving North Korean threats and other shared challenges.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** Secretary Blinken is to [visit](#) South Korea in March to attend the third session of the Summit for Democracy, a US-led multilateral platform meant to promote solidarity among democracies.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** Experts [contradict](#) Seoul's claim that North Korean satellite is "just orbiting," as the satellite recently has used thrusters to adjust position, demonstrating it is 'alive' and functional.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** South Korea's Defense Minister Shin Won-sik [holds](#) talks with Gen. Christopher Cavoli, commander of US European Command and Supreme Allied Commander Europe, in Seoul to discuss security situation on the Korean Peninsula and ways to bolster ties with NATO.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** Hanwha Aerospace Corporation [says](#) it has submitted a bid proposal for an unmanned vehicle project of the United States Army via a consortium formed with US defense company Anduril Industries Incorporation.

**Feb. 29, 2024:** Sweden's ambassador-designate to Pyongyang Andreas Bengtsson [visits](#) North Korea amid prospects that European countries may reopen diplomatic missions in the country following years of North Korea's COVID-19 border shutdown.

**March 1, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [express](#) "deep concerns" over North Korea's definition of the inter-Korean relationship as one between two hostile states and its potential attempt at changing the status quo in the Yellow Sea.

**March 1, 2024:** Gen. Anthony Cotton, commander of US Strategic Command, [warns](#) that growing military cooperation among North Korea, Russia, China, and Iran raises the possibility of "simultaneous conflicts with multiple nuclear-armed adversaries

**March 2, 2024:** South Korea's Navy and Marine Corps [join](#) the United States and Thailand in the large-scale annual multinational *Cobra Gold* exercise to enhance amphibious landing capabilities and humanitarian operations.

**March 4, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [kick off](#) the major annual combined *Freedom Shield* military exercise to reinforce deterrence against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats amid concern Pyongyang could use the maneuvers as a pretext for provocations.

**March 5, 2024:** National Security Council senior director for East Asia and Oceania Mira Rapp-Hooper [says](#) that the United States seeks dialogue with North Korea, including on mitigating the risk of an inadvertent conflict on the Korean Peninsula, stressing its goal for the "complete" denuclearization of the peninsula remains unchanged.

**March 5, 2024:** North Korea [denounces](#) an annual joint military exercise between South Korea and the United States, warning they will pay a "dear price" for what it called their large-scale war drills.

**March 6, 2024:** Top US nuclear envoy Jung Pak [points out](#) the need for "interim steps" to be taken on a path towards North Korea's ultimate denuclearization, which would not happen "overnight."

**March 7, 2024:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [calls](#) for intensifying "practical actual war drills" during a visit to a military training base, as a joint military exercise between South Korea and the United States is under way.

**March 7, 2024:** *Bloomberg* [reports](#) that South Korea faces pressure to join a US-led group in imposing chip export sanctions on China.

**March 7, 2024:** An agreement relating to supply chain resilience among Indo-Pacific countries [is to take effect](#) in Korea in April as part of the country's efforts to reduce risks in securing core materials.

**March 8, 2024:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [guides](#) artillery firing drills involving front-line units capable of striking the "enemy's capital," in an apparent response to an ongoing joint

military exercise between South Korea and the United States.

**March 8, 2024:** Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff [says](#) North Korea has tried to jam US-ROK navigation system during drills; no military or civilian damage from first GPS jamming by DPRK in eight years is reported.

**March 8, 2024:** US court [orders](#) forfeiture of 145 crypto accounts tied to North Korea cybercrime, Washington alleges two Chinese nationals used accounts to launder some \$100 million in virtual assets stolen by DPRK

**March 12, 2024:** 2024 Annual Threat Assessment report [claims](#) that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un "almost certainly" has no intentions of negotiating away his nuclear program and aims to use his defense ties with Russia to achieve acceptance as a nuclear state.

**March 13, 2024:** Air Force [holds](#) exercise aimed at boosting readiness against threats posed by North Korean cruise missiles and mobile missile vehicles amid ongoing major South Korea-US military exercise.

**March 15, 2024:** Gen. Gregory Guillot, commander of US Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, [voices](#) concerns over 'increasingly advanced' long-range North Korean missiles, while highlighting evolving security challenges from China, Russia and Iran.

**March 15, 2024:** South Korean and US warplanes [stage](#) a combined live-fire exercise against North Korean cruise missile and long-range artillery threats in waters off the west coast.

**March 15, 2024:** ROK and the United States [hold](#) large-scale combined air assault drills in various locations across South Korea, in a move to strengthen joint operational capabilities.

**March 18, 2024:** North Korea [fires](#) an unspecified ballistic missile toward the East Sea.

**March 18, 2024:** Secretary Blinken [says](#) the United States will always work with South Korea to firmly respond to North Korea's provocations after Pyongyang fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea.

**March 18, 2024:** United States [condemns](#) North Korea's ballistic missile launches as a violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions, and calls for the recalcitrant regime to return to dialogue.

**March 18, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [reaffirm](#) their shared commitment to the complete denuclearization of North Korea, hours after the North fired multiple short-range ballistic missiles.

**March 18, 2024:** South Korea's Defense Minister Shin [reaffirms](#) that the current size of US troops stationed in the country is "absolutely necessary" after a former top Pentagon official Christopher Miller questioned the need for such a presence.

**March 18, 2024:** Los Angeles Dodgers [beat](#) Korean national team 5-2 in the final of four exhibition games at Gocheok Sky Dome in western Seoul.

**March 19, 2024:** US Senior Official for North Korea Jung Pak [says](#) the United States remains "always watchful" for the possibility of North Korea conducting "gray zone" activities short of a major attack, restating Washington sees no signs of the recalcitrant regime preparing for a near-term attack.

**March 19, 2024:** North Korean leader Kim Jong Un [guides](#) firing drills involving super-large multiple rocket launchers.

**March 19, 2024:** South Korea's SK Hynix [is set to begin](#) delivering its fifth-generation high-bandwidth memory chips—the 3E—to the US corporation Nvidia by the end of March, nabbing yet another significant lead in the highly competitive space.

**March 20, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [conduct](#) river-crossing drills near the border with North Korea to enhance the interoperability of their troops.

**March 20, 2024:** North Korea [says](#) it has successfully conducted a ground jet test of a solid-fuel engine for a new type of intermediate hypersonic missile amid heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

**March 20, 2024:** United States [calls](#) on North Korea to refrain from "provocative" and

"destabilizing" actions after Pyongyang claims to have tested a solid-fuel engine for a new intermediate hypersonic missile.

**March 21, 2024:** Gen. Paul LaCamera, commander of US Forces Korea, [emphasizes](#) the need to continue to invest in 28,500 US service members in South Korea through training programs to defend South Korea against evolving North Korean threats. These remarks come after a former top Pentagon official Christopher Miller questioned the need for such a presence.

**March 21, 2024:** A report by the UN panel of experts [shows](#) that North Korea engages in "malicious" cyber activities to generate about half of its foreign currency revenue and bankroll its weapons programs.

**March 21, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [agree](#) to launch a working-level consultative body to tackle North Korea's illegal smuggling of refined oil.

**March 22, 2024:** Senior US official Alan Estevez [portrays](#) South Korean companies' reported move to stop selling used semiconductor manufacturing equipment to China as "encouraging," as Washington has been seeking tighter export controls on key technologies amid an intensifying Sino-US rivalry.

**March 25, 2024:** Unification Minister Kim Yung-ho [asks](#) for US lawmakers' bipartisan cooperation and support for South Korea's efforts to seek a peaceful unification with North Korea.

**March 26, 2024:** Mark Cancian, a senior adviser at CSIS, and Chris Park, a CSIS research assistant, [float](#) the idea of using South Korea's 105mm munitions stockpile to support Ukraine's fight against Russia, as Kyiv urgently needs artillery ammunition supplies in the ongoing war of attrition.

**March 26, 2024:** United States [restates](#) the importance of dialogue with North Korea, after Pyongyang claimed Japanese Prime Minister Kishida expressed his intention for a summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

**March 27, 2024:** *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that South Korea's SK Hynix is set to invest approximately \$4 billion in building an advanced

chip packaging facility nearby Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, the operations are expected to commence in 2028, providing jobs for up to 1,000 people.

**March 27, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [launch](#) a task force to effectively block North Korea from financing its unlawful nuclear and missile programs.

**March 28, 2024:** Top military officers of South Korea, Japan and the US [discuss](#) trilateral efforts for security cooperation to counter North Korean military threats.

**March 28, 2024:** US Marines [join](#) a large-scale combined exercise at a high-tech training facility in South Korea for the first time amid efforts to boost readiness against North Korean threats.

**March 29, 2024:** Declassified documents on first North Korean nuclear crisis in 1993 [show](#) that the United States had believed that North Korea's demand for light water reactors in return for dismantling its nuclear facilities could be a "significant opening" to resolving Pyongyang's nuclear issues.

**March 29, 2024:** President Yoon [calls](#) on a group of US lawmakers to support South Korean companies operating in a wide range of areas from security, economy and technology to culture and space.

**March 31, 2024:** Japan's *Kyodo News* [claim](#) that the President Biden is considering inviting South Korean President Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida to the NATO event in Washington in July and holding the trilateral summit on the margins.

**April 2, 2024:** 2024 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers [takes](#) issue with South Korean bills calling on foreign online content providers to pay network usage fees, saying they could be "anticompetitive."

**April 2, 2024:** Joint Chiefs of Staff [says](#) that North Korea has fired what appeared to be an intermediate-range missile into the East Sea, in its third ballistic missile launch of the year.

**April 2, 2024:** South Korea, the United States and Japan [conduct](#) a joint aerial exercise involving nuclear-capable B-52 bombers near the Korean

Peninsula, in an apparent show of force against North Korea following its latest ballistic missile launch.

**April 3, 2024:** White House [says](#) that President Biden has underscored the "enduring" US commitment to the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula during phone talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

**April 3, 2024:** North Korea [says](#) it has successfully test-fired a new intermediate-range ballistic missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead, saying that all missiles the country has developed are now solid-fuel and nuclear capable.

**April 3, 2024:** NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg [says](#) that South Korea has been invited to the NATO summit scheduled in July as one of the non-NATO partners in the Indo-Pacific region, which also include Japan, Australia, and New Zealand.

**April 4, 2024:** White House [says](#) that President Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida are to discuss an array of issues, including North Korean threats and the two countries' trilateral cooperation with South Korea, during their upcoming summit on April 10.

**April 4, 2024:** South Korea's SK Hynix [announces](#) a \$3.9 billion investment package in West Lafayette, Indiana where the Korean memory chipmaker will build its first US manufacturing base.

**April 4, 2024:** US Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell [suggests](#) that the US-UK-Australia trilateral security partnership known as AUKUS may soon be expanded to include other Indo-Pacific nations.

**April 5, 2024:** South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho [discusses](#) Ukraine support and North Korea-Russia cooperation at NATO meeting.

**April 5, 2024:** *Wall Street Journal* [reports](#) that Samsung Electronics Corporation plans to more than double its total semiconductor investment in Texas to about \$44 billion, as the South Korean chipmaker is expected to win grants under a US initiative to strengthen domestic chip production.



**April 7, 2024:** Gen. Charles Flynn, Pacific Army commander, [says](#) the United States is to deploy ground-based launchers capable of firing SM-6 and Tomahawk missiles in the Indo-Pacific region soon to address rising security threats.

**April 9, 2024:** Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin [reaffirms](#) US commitment to "shore up" stability on the Korean Peninsula in the midst of persistent North Korean threats, as Washington is stepping up bilateral and trilateral cooperation with South Korea and Japan.

**April 9, 2024:** US-ROK forces [hold](#) joint naval drills on mine warfare against North Korea to practice both removing DPRK mines from ports and installing mines in enemy waters.

**April 10, 2024:** Secretary of State Blinken [reiterates](#) concerns over military support for Russia's defense industrial base from North Korea, Iran and China, as Moscow continues its protracted war against Ukraine.

**April 10, 2024:** National Security Advisor Sullivan [highlights](#) the "synergies" in trilateral cooperation between South Korea, the United States, and Japan in security, technology, and other fields on the eve of a summit between President Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Kishida.

**April 10, 2024:** A senior US official [says](#) the United States, Britain, and Australia are considering South Korea, Canada and New Zealand as potential partners for cooperation on advanced capability projects of their AUKUS security partnership.

**April 11, 2024:** Main opposition Democratic Party [retains](#) a majority in the National Assembly in general elections in another major setback for the ruling People Power Party and President Yoon Suk Yeol.

**April 11, 2024:** President Biden [backs](#) Japan's push for summit with North Korea in talks with Prime Minister Kishida, the US and Japanese leaders also unveil plans to bolster joint deterrence, while hailing trilateral cooperation with Seoul.

**April 12, 2024:** United States, Japan, and the Philippines [affirm](#) their commitment to the "complete" denuclearization of the Korean

Peninsula and denounce North Korea's growing military threats in their first-ever trilateral joint statement.

**April 12, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [reaffirm](#) in a joint statement a plan to hold a discussion-based exercise simulating North Korea's use of a nuclear weapon as part of efforts to strengthen their joint response to Pyongyang's nuclear threats.

**April 12, 2024:** Seoul's industry ministry [says](#) the IPEF agreement relating to supply chain resilience is to enter into force in South Korea.

**April 12, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [kick off](#) a joint annual air exercise, involving some 100 warplanes, to strengthen their readiness against North Korean military threats.

**April 12, 2024:** South Korea, Japan, and the United States [stage](#) long-planned joint naval exercises involving a US aircraft carrier to ensure readiness against nuclear and missile threats from North Korea.

**April 12, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [launch](#) a bilateral working group on artificial intelligence focused on boosting tech cooperation and advancing joint research.

**April 12, 2024:** South Korea, the United States, and Japan [hold](#) trilateral naval drills involving a US aircraft carrier to improve their joint operability against North Korea's nuclear and missile threats.

**April 13, 2024:** Top US envoy to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield [plans](#) to pay a visit to the Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas to stress 'ironclad' security commitment and openness to "unconditional" dialogue with North Korea.

**April 13, 2024:** Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun [says](#) South Korea and the United States have agreed to hold bilateral talks on supply chain and commercial issues and a trilateral industry ministers' meeting with Japan in the first half of the year.

**April 14, 2024:** South Korea's Defense Minister Shin [says](#) North Korea's hypersonic missile was "unsuccessful in its last glide flight."

**April 15, 2024:** US UN envoy Thomas-Greenfield to [meet](#) with South Korea's Defense Minister Shin to boost bilateral cooperation amid North Korean threats.

**April 15, 2024:** US government, striving to strengthen domestic semiconductor production, [announces](#) a plan to award Samsung Electronics Corporation up to \$6.4 billion in grants to support the South Korean tech giant's chipmaking investment in central Texas.

**April 16, 2024:** US UN envoy Thomas-Greenfield and South Korea's Foreign Minister Cho [discuss](#) ways to build a new mechanism for monitoring the enforcement of UN sanctions on North Korea.

**April 16, 2024:** Senior US officials [discuss](#) with Beijing officials a range of regional and global issues, including North Korea, the Taiwan Strait, and the South China Sea during their visit to China.

**April 16, 2024:** State Department report [shows](#) that North Korea has the capability to genetically engineer biological military products, noting Pyongyang has a "dedicated, national-level offensive" biological weapons program.

**April 17, 2024:** United States is "incredibly [concerned](#)" about long-suspected military cooperation between North Korea and Iran on nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

**April 17, 2024:** Department of Justice [says](#) that a former North Korean diplomat serving in Thailand was indicted on charges of sanctions evasion, a conspiracy to commit bank fraud and money laundering.

**April 18, 2024:** South Korea's Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen, and Japan's Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki [acknowledge](#) "serious concerns" over the "sharp" depreciation of the South Korean won and Japanese yen during their first trilateral talks in Washington.

**April 18, 2024:** Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Kim Myung-soo [holds talks](#) with the new commander of the US Pacific Fleet Stephen Koehler on ways to boost the allies' combined defense readiness.

**April 19, 2024:** Special operations forces of South Korea and the United States [stage](#) an airborne

training to enhance their joint operability as part of ongoing air drills between the two nations.

**April 19, 2024:** North Korea [denounces](#) recent visit to South Korea and Japan by the US UN envoy, calling it an "aid-begging" trip to invigorate the "weakened illegal" sanctions against Pyongyang.

**April 20, 2024:** Top diplomats of G7 countries [stress](#) their commitment to counter evasion of anti-North Korea sanctions, as a UN expert panel monitoring sanctions enforcement faces its termination this month due to Russia's veto.

**April 20, 2024:** North Korea [conducts](#) a "super-large warhead" power test for a strategic cruise missile and test-fires a new anti-aircraft missile, further ratcheting up tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

**April 22, 2024:** Joint Chiefs of Staff [says](#) that North Korea has fired several rounds of short-range ballistic missiles toward the East Sea, three days after it launched cruise missiles into the Yellow Sea.

**April 23, 2024:** 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices issued by the US State Department [state](#) that North Koreans remain exposed to a wide range of human rights abuses, including forced repatriations, extrajudicial killings, forced abortion and the "worst forms" of child labor.

**April 23, 2024:** United States [condemns](#) North Korea's latest round of ballistic missile launches as a violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions.

**April 23, 2024:** United States [pursues](#) a "fair" and "equitable" outcome in the upcoming negotiations with South Korea over the sharing of the cost for the stationing of US Forces Korea.

**April 23, 2024:** *Korean Central News Agency* [claims](#) North Korea has conducted a tactical drill simulating a nuclear counterattack involving super-large multiple rocket launchers.

**April 24, 2024:** Kim Yo Jong, sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, [lambasts](#) joint military drills between South Korea and the United States and vows to strengthen the North's military power against hostile forces.

**April 24, 2024:** South Korea and the United States [conduct](#) joint space exercises to fend off North Korea's global positioning system jamming attacks and other space-based threats.

**April 25, 2024:** Deputy Secretary of State Campbell [says](#) the United States will take steps "in time" to have three-way engagements on nuclear deterrence with South Korea and Japan, reiterating the "firm" US security commitment to its Asian allies.

**April 25, 2024:** North Korea [threatens](#) retaliation against US plans for new sanctions monitoring against the regime.

**April 26, 2024:** *Korean Central News Agency* [reports](#) that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has guided the test of a rocket developed by "newly-founded" military factory, as North Korea celebrates 92nd founding anniversary of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army.

**April 29, 2024:** Victor Cha [conducts](#) the first US multi-question polling of strategic elites in South Korea on the nuclear question and finds that the vast majority of South Korean strategic elites (66%) do not favor nuclearization and that confidence in the United States as a security provider remains strong.

