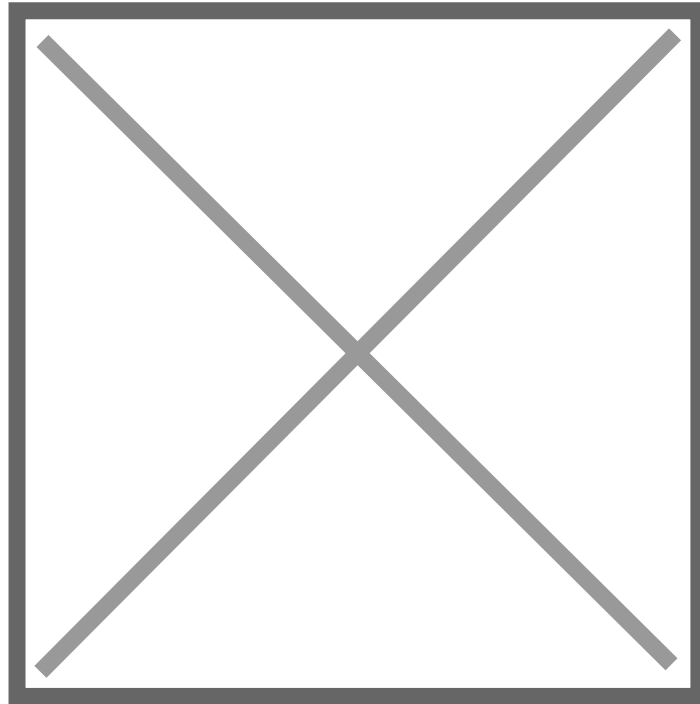


South Korea, US, Japan conduct joint air drills



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Seoul, November 03 (QNA) – South Korea, the United States and Japan held combined air drills, involving at least one B-1B bomber, south of the Korean Peninsula on Sunday, the South’s military said, in a show of force after North Korea’s new intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) launch last week.

The trilateral drills took place over waters east of South Korea's southern island of Jeju amid heightened tensions after the North fired the new Hwasong-19 ICBM into the East Sea on Thursday in its first launch of a long-range ballistic missile this year.

During the drills, South Korean, U.S. and Japanese fighter jets escorted the U.S. heavy bomber over waters where the air defense identification zones of South Korea and Japan overlap, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said.

It marked the second air exercise between the three sides this year, the JCS said, amid joint efforts to strengthen trilateral security cooperation against evolving North Korean nuclear and missile threats.