

Tension between North and South Korea flares as South plans resumption of front-line military activities

Seoul, South Korea — South Korea on Tuesday took steps to suspend a contentious military agreement with North Korea and resume front-line military activities, as tension between the rivals rises over the North's recent launch of trash-carrying balloons. North Korea didn't immediately respond, but South Korea's resumption of firing exercises or propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts will likely prompt North Korea to take similar or stronger steps along the rivals' heavily militarized border.

In the past week, North Korea has used balloons to drop manure, cigarette butts, scraps of cloth and waste paper on South Korea, prompting Seoul to vow "unbearable" retaliation. Asked about it Monday during a regular news briefing in Washington, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller called it "quite disgusting tactic."

North Korea said it would halt its balloon campaign on Sunday.

On Tuesday, South Korea's Cabinet Council and President Yoon Suk Yeol approved a proposal to suspend the 2018 inter-Korean agreement on lowering front-line military tension. It will take effect once Seoul formally notifies the North.

Cho Chang-rae, South Korea's deputy defense minister for policy, told reporters that South Korea will use all available measures to protect the public from North Korean provocations.

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