

Missile Panic in Hawaii

What is the issue?

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- Hawaii has re-introduced Cold War-era sirens and also has text and email warning systems for ensuring the safety of its residents.

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- But recently, Hawaii residents received a text message, which falsely stated a ballistic missile threat and asked them to seek shelter immediately.

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- This erratic mistake could prove costly and requires scrutiny.

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What just happened?

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- The text declaring emergency was apparently sent by mistake by an employee at Hawaii's "Emergency Management Agency".

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- While the incorrect alert was corrected by email 18 minutes later, for the next 38 minutes, there was no follow-up phone text correction.

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- Notably, Hawaii is only 4,661 miles from North Korea, which is well within the 6,000 miles range of the Korea's Hwasong 14 missile.

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- While after trigger, the missile will take 20 minutes to reach Hawaii, the pacific command would take 5 minutes to react.

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- This effectively leaves residents with just 15 minutes to seek shelter and hence the emergency call caused immense panic.

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- Also, as many felt that it was the end of their lives, they tried calling their loved ones, and telephone services too got jammed briefly.

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- Most rushed to basement shelters but some decided they'd rather die looking at Hawaii's famed sea beaches.

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What was the official response?

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- **Government** - Across ranks, government officials apologised for the mess-up and even a federal investigation was commissioned.

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- Officials have also started working on a 'cancellation template' for sending corrections faster to mobile phones.

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- Notably, Since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour during the WW-II, Hawaii feels impending attacks sharply.

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- **Nuclear experts** - They've stressed that a mistaken message could possibly start an unintended nuclear war.

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- This is because the enemy could perceive that the fuss is a cover-up for an offensive strike and hence triggers his "first-strike stability" for deterrence.

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- They've hence called for a strong calculated review of the current mess up.

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Source: The Indian Express

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