



South Korea Aborts Rocket Launch

According to a report in the Associated Press, South Korea aborted its first launch of a new rocket just minutes before its scheduled liftoff. The Korea Space Launch Vehicle-1 (or Naro-1) was to be the first rocket launched from the new Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Korea.



The Chinese Xinhua News Agency's website, [Xinhuanet.com](#), quotes Lee Joo-jin of the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) as saying, "There was a problem in the automatic launch sequence that caused the launch to be called off," and the [UPI is reporting](#) that the problem was caused by a helium-operated valve. Owing to difficulties inherent in the process of refueling the two-stage rocket, it will be at least 72 hours before another launch can be attempted.

The scheduled launch had not gone unnoticed by the communist regime in North Korea, which has widely been understood to be developing its own launch capacity in connection with its nuclear weapons program. North Korea's launch of a Taepodong-2 missile in April was condemned by the United States government for being a deliberately provocative act. In the [words of President Obama](#), "With this provocative act, North Korea has ignored its international obligations, rejected unequivocal calls for restraint, and further isolated itself from the community of nations."

Yesterday, the U.S. State Department dismissed North Korean objections to the scheduled launch of the Naro-1. According to the [Yonhap News Agency](#), State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said, "The South Koreans have developed their program in a very open and transparent way, and in keeping with the international agreements that they have signed on to. This is in stark contrast to the example set by North Korea, which has not abided by its international agreements."

Although South Korea has utilized the rockets and launch facilities of other nations to send 11 satellites into orbit since 1992, the Korea Space Launch Vehicle-1 is intended to be the first test of its capacity to become a space power in its own right.

According to press reports, the rocket was developed under a cooperative agreement between South Korea and Russia. Russia has launched two satellites for the South Koreans in recent years.

[Reuters reports](#) that the Naro-1 is intended to be only the first step in a very ambitious space program for South Korea. KARI intends to develop its own rockets by 2018 and launch a lunar probe by 2025. The South Korean government is pursuing development of commercial, rather than military, launch capacity. An agreement between the South Korean government and the U.S. military is intended to preclude the South Koreans from developing long-range missiles.

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