



Written by [James Heiser](#) on August 25, 2009

South Korea Launches First Rocket

After a six-day delay caused by a faulty valve, South Korea has launched its first rocket, the Naro-1, from the Naro Space Center in Goheung. However, the launch was only partially successful: the satellite payload was lost when it was released twenty-two miles higher than planned. According to the *New York Times*, “The South Korean rocket was carrying a domestically built satellite designed to monitor the atmosphere and the ocean.”



Throughout the Cold War, a typical tactic of the Soviet regime was to proclaim the “moral equivalence” of actions taken by free nations and those behind the Iron Curtain. North Korea’s response to the launch of the Naro-1 is typical example of such communist *agitprop*: in the words of the *New York Times*, the regime “has said it will ‘closely watch’ whether the United States and its allies criticize the South’s rocket launching. The North insists that its rocket launching in April was part of a peaceful space program and accused the United Nations of hypocrisy when it imposed sanctions.”

However, [a report at Bloomberg.com](#) noted that “U.S. and Japanese officials have said South Korea has sufficiently explained its plans, which were set back after it aborted the mission a week ago. South Korea is under no sanction by the Security Council, and in 2004 [joined the Missile Technology Control Regime](#) [MTCR], an international agreement to prevent the proliferation of missile technology for weapons purposes.” North Korea has not joined the MTCR and seems to many observers to be far more interested in developing launch capacity in service of its nuclear weapons program than for any conceivably peaceful purpose.

The South Korean space agency developed the Naro-1 with help from the Russian Khrunichev space production center at a cost of \$400 million. According to press reports, the South Koreans first approached the United States for assistance developing a space program, only to see its requests fail on account of what amounted to a unilateral disarmament mentality. In the words of the *New York Times* report, “With all its neighbors — China, Japan and North Korea — pursuing space programs, South Korea has been eager to have its own. But when the United States refused to help, for fear of encouraging a potential arms race in the region, South Korea turned to Russia.” If the South Koreans had not gained assistance from the Russian space agency, the result would have been a rather one sided “race,” with the North Korean regime pursuing its program as quickly as possible, and the South left to its own limited resources.



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South Korea has now become the tenth nation with a demonstrated capacity for launching rockets to orbit. Although the launch of the Naro-1 was dependent on the Russians for its development, the South Korean space agency hopes to develop its own rockets by 2018, and plans to launch a lunar probe in 2025.

Photo: AP Images



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