



Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on June 10, 2010

South Korean Rocket Fails Again

After a day's delay in liftoff due to a malfunctioning fire extinguishing system on the launchpad, on June 10 at 5:01 p.m. South Korean time, the Naro-1 satellite launcher lifted off from the Naro Space Center at Goheung on the south coast. It then exploded about two and a half minutes later. This was the second failure in as many tries for the multistage rocket. Controllers who were at first cheering, were dismayed 137 seconds later at seeing a bright flash on their screens transmitted from the camera mounted on the tip of the rocket. At that time, the Naro-1 would have been about 43 miles above the earth. Ahn Byong-man, the Minister of Education, Science and Technology, told reporters that officials assume the explosion took place at that point. It was during the first-stage ignition.



Though there was live camera coverage, footage of the rocket falling back into the water could not at first be clearly seen. It took video engineers splicing together available shots from different camera angles, to finally assemble recognizable video of the event. The head of the Korean Aerospace Research Institute, Lee Joo-jin, asserted that everything seemed fine prior to the explosion.

Despite this major setback, plans remain to continue with the space program in South Korea, although there may be ensuing legalities and budget issues. It had hoped to continue lessening dependence on other countries to launch its satellite and communication systems, and assemble its own space vehicle by about 2018.

Politics have been part and parcel of South Korea's space program during this time. Said the [Wall Street Journal](#):

South Korea's space efforts have been criticized by neighboring North Korea, whose own attempts to build a multistage rocket have been seen as part of a missile weapons program and drawn international condemnation. North Korea has tested three multistage rockets, most recently in April last year. Pyongyang has claimed it reached space with each, though international space agencies and militaries say none succeeded.

A report from [Reuters](#) added:

Pyongyang said it was unjust for it to be hit with U.N. sanctions for firing off a long-range rocket in April 2009, but regional powers saw the launch as a disguised test of a ballistic missile that violated U.N. measures.

Apart from North Korea, few doubt the South's rocket was for anything but its civilian space program, although experts said it did raise questions about regional security because it could also enhance



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Seoul's ability to build ballistic missiles.

Another perhaps controversial aspect is that South Korea engaged the help of Russia in developing the Naro-1's liquid-fueled first stage. The Russians assistance included tests and technical advice. Following last year's launch, Russia asserted its booster had nothing to do with that failure, which later was blamed on problems with the stage-separation systems. By Thursday noon Russia had yet to comment on this latest explosion; neither had North Korea.

There is no word as yet from South Korean officials as to when a third attempt will be made. The Naro-1, also called the Korea Space Launch Vehicle-1, was a 108 ft. long two-stage rocket which cost \$450.7 million to construct.

Photo: A South Korean Space Launch Vehicle-1 takes off from the launch pad at the Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Korea on June 10, 2010: AP Images



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