

# South Korean Satellite Launch Misses Orbit

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*Editor's Note: It is rocket science, you know.*



GOHEUNG, South Korea – South Korea launched its first rocket Tuesday, just months after rival North Korea's launch drew international anger, but space officials said the satellite it carried failed to enter its intended orbit. A Science Ministry statement called the launch a "partial success," as the satellite separated from the rocket normally before entering a different orbit.

The launch could boost South Korea's space ambitions, but the North warned it would keep a close eye on the international response. There was no immediate comment from North Korea.

The two-stage Naro rocket — delayed several times since July due to technical glitches — lifted off Tuesday from South Korea's space center on Oenaro Island, about 290 miles (465 kilometers) south of Seoul, about 5 p.m. (0800 GMT, 4 a.m. EDT).

It was South Korea's first launch of a rocket from its own territory. Since 1992,

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it has launched 11 satellites, all on foreign-made rockets sent from overseas sites.

The rocket, built with Russian help, was carrying a domestically built satellite aimed at observing the atmosphere and oceans.

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak said though the satellite failed to enter its planned orbit, it was a "half success."

"We must further strive to realize the dream of becoming a space power," Lee said after a Cabinet meeting, according to his office.

South Korean officials hope the rocket will boost the country's aim to become a regional space power, along with China, Japan and India. North Korea, however, has warned it would "closely watch" how the U.S. and neighboring countries respond to the launch.

In April, the North claimed it launched a multistage rocket it said was mounted with a satellite. The U.S., Japan and other nations condemned the launch as a test of ballistic missile technology since the same rocket can be mounted with a warhead.

The North, unlike the South, is banned from ballistic missile activity by Security Council resolutions as part of international efforts to eliminate its nuclear and long-range missile programs, which are seen as a threat. After the April launch, the Council slapped Pyongyang with new sanctions.

South Korean officials said it is inappropriate to compare their launch with the North's because Seoul's is for peaceful purposes and was carried out with transparency.

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"As I look at the case, our government, as a member of international treaties on nonproliferation, has been engaging in its space development program with a responsible attitude. We've been doing this openly," Defense Ministry spokesman Won Tae-jae told reporters.

In recent weeks, the North has significantly softened its stance toward the South, freeing a South Korean worker held there for more than four months, agreeing to lift restrictions on border crossings and pledging to resume joint projects and the reunion of families separated during the Korean War.

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