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## Seoul takes flak for emergency alert on NK's launch

*Citizens confused by different messages by city government, interior ministry*

By Jun Ji-hyo  
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Many Seoul residents were stunned Wednesday morning after receiving an emergency text alert sent by the Seoul Metropolitan Government advising them to prepare for evacuation.

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The text alert was sent at 6:41 a.m., shortly after North Korea fired toward the south what it claims to be a space launch vehicle. But the message confused residents by simply telling them to prepare for evacuation, without explaining why and where they should go to seek refuge.

The country's largest online portal Naver's mobile webpage suffered a brief service disruption for about five minutes from 6:43 a.m. due to high user traffic as many people tried to use the website to obtain more information, according to Naver.

At 7:03 a.m., confusion turned into anger as another emergency text message was sent by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety, saying the earlier one sent by the Seoul city government was a mistake.

At 7:25 a.m., the city government sent another text message advising Seoul residents to return to their normal lives as the alert was lifted in the entire capital area.

That did little to appease Seoul residents, many of whom were gripped by fear and confusion for about 40 minutes during the morning.

"I was in panic when I received the first text alert from the Seoul city government as there were no guidelines about how to evacuate," said Kim Sang-rok, 36, who runs a consulting company. "I felt more anxiety as Naver's service page did not open. This led



Seen above is what is believed to be a component of a projectile launched by North Korea, Wednesday. The component was found in waters about 200 kilometers west of Echoong Island, which is some 60 kilometers southwest of Gunsan, North Jeolla Province. The South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCSC) said it retrieved the part for further analysis.

Courtesy of JCS



Emergency text alerts sent by the Seoul Metropolitan Government and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety are seen on a mobile phone of a citizen, Wednesday. The Seoul City's message in the bottom advises people to evacuate, while the ministry's message on top says the message sent by the city was a false alert.

Korea Times photo by Hong In-il

me to even think that a war broke out."

He said he was very confused in the morning as he was not sure whether he had to go to work or pack a bag to

evacuate.

Kang Hye-joo, a 33-year-old mother of two children in Seoul's Jungnang District, said she woke her children

agency messages.

The interior ministry said it sent out an emergency alert to residents of Baengnyeong Island and Daechong Island, near the Northern Limit Line separating the two Koreas on the West Sea, advising residents there to evacuate. Seoul was not affected by this alert.

"Both the interior ministry and local governments can send an emergency text alert. In today's case, we did not ask the Seoul city government to send such a message," a ministry official said.

The Seoul city government's explanation was different. It said it had received an instruction from the interior ministry to send the alert.

"We should send out the alert first before verifying the situation and lift it after everything is clear. This is the procedure in an emergency," an official at the city government said.

Later in the day, Seoul Mayor Oh Se-hoon apologized for "causing confusion," but stressed that the city government's text alert "could be seen as an overreaction, but it was not false."

Meanwhile, the city's text alert led to the downsizing of an event hosted by the Ministry of Welfare and Health inviting five Pacific Island leaders and their spouses for a chance to experience South Korea's medical services.

The event was scaled down as a majority of the participants notified the ministry of their intention not to attend after they were shocked by the evacuation alert, according to insiders.

According to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the projectile launched by the North fell into the West Sea following what was described as an "abnormal" flight.

Pyeonggiang also confirmed the failure, saying its new Chollima-1 rocket, carrying the Malligyong-1 military reconnaissance satellite, fell into the sea due to the "abnormal starting of the second-stage engine," according to the North's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA).

The KCNA added that the North will conduct a second launch as soon as possible.

up and dressed them as soon as she received the text alert.

"After that, I looked out of the window to see what was going on, but it was quiet. I didn't know what to do next, while my children were crying after waking up," she said. "It was the worst morning ever."

On the Blind app, a communication platform for workers, screenshots were shared of a text alert sent by the Japanese government to people in Okinawa.

The screenshots showed that Japan's text alert was sent 10 minutes earlier than the one sent by the Seoul city government, but contained detailed information about why people have to evacuate and where they should go.

Amid growing controversy, the office of President Yoon Suk Yeol said the Seoul city government overreacted when it sent the evacuation alert.

Still, the interior ministry and the city government were busy blaming each other for the inconsistent emer-

# N. Korea's spy satellite launch fails as rocket falls into sea

*Pyongyang admits failure, vows to carry out another launch*

By Nam Hyun-woo  
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North Korea fired what it claims to be "a space launch vehicle" Wednesday, but it fell into the West Sea after "an abnormal flight."

Quickly admitting the failure, an unusual move by the reclusive state, Pyongyang vowed to conduct a second launch in the near future.

According to South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), it detected a projectile launched from Tongchang-ri in North Pyongan Province at 6:29 a.m., which fell into waters approximately 200 kilometers west of South Korea's southwestern island of Eocheong, which is some 60 kilometers southwest of Gusan, North Jeolla Province.

The JCS said the projectile "fell into the waters after an abnormal flight" and the South Korean military retrieved several parts of the North Korean vehicle, including what was assumed to be a link between the first and second stages of the rocket.

About two and a half hours later, after the launch, the North's state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) confirmed that it had launched its new Chollima-1 rocket carrying a military reconnaissance satellite, the Mallyeong-1, and that the rocket had fallen into the sea "after losing thrust due to the abnormal starting of the second-stage engine after the separation of the first stage during the normal flight."

Citing the North's National Aero-



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's rocket launch during a news program at Seoul Station, Wednesday.

AP-Yonhap

space Development Administration spokesperson, the KCNA said the failure was attributable to "the low reliability and stability of the new-type engine system applied to carrier rocket Chollima-1 and the unstable character of the fuel used."

It continued, saying that the aerospace administration will "conduct the second launch as soon as possible" after investigating defects revealed in the launch.

"It is likely that the North will conduct a second launch before June 11, which is within the period of time of the country's prior notification made earlier this week," said Hong Min, a senior researcher at the Korea Institute for National Unification.

On Monday, North Korea notified Japan of its plans to put its first military reconnaissance satellite in geosynchronous orbit between May 31 and June 11.

"If there were problems in the satellite, it will take time for a second launch, but if the root cause of the failure was in stage separation of the rocket — as the KCNA report said — chances are high that the North has prepared a number of spare launch vehicles, given that the regime has been testing multiple launch vehicles for intercontinental ballistic missiles," Hong added.

History is on North Korea's side as it test-fired a medium-range ballistic missile on Feb. 27 last year, announcing that it carried out an important test to develop a reconnaissance satellite, and then it launched another, March 5 when it made a similar statement.

"Along with that, the political pressure that the North's rocket engineers are facing is likely to prompt the regime to prepare for a second launch in a hurry," Hong said.

"North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has been paying his attention to the spy satellite program since the eighth Congress of its Workers' Party in 2021, and having no results from the satellite program means humiliation for the regime."

The extremely quick admission of the failure as well as the revelation of the cause of the failure is regarded as a rare case for the North Korean regime.

Since North Korea launched its first reconnaissance satellite, the Kwangmyongsong-1, in 1998, the country has launched what it claimed were rockets carrying satel-

lites on seven occasions. But it had barely acknowledged any failures in those launches before Wednesday.

Of those launches, the North managed to place into satellite orbit the Kwangmyongsong-3 Unit 2 in 2012 and the Kwangmyongsong-4 in 2016. The satellites are still in orbit, according to live satellite tracker website N2YO.com, but they are assumed not to be operating because their signal transmissions with Earth have not been detected.

"North Korea has already informed the International Maritime Organization about the satellite launch, so it seems that the North sought to improve its credibility within the international community by announcing the failure and revealing the reasons like a normal country," Hong said.

## Political aftermath

Although the launch ended in failure, it was followed by strong condemnation from the international community. South Korea's National Security Council (NSC) called the rocket launch "a grave violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions" and a serious provocation, threatening peace on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

"Also, the participants agreed to maintain a coordination posture with allies and friendly nations while continuing to carefully monitor the possibility of North Korea's additional launches," the NSC said in a statement.

Adam Hodge, a spokesperson of the White House National Security Council, also said in a statement that the U.S. "strongly condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) for its launch using ballistic missile technology, which is a brazen violation of multiple U.N. Security Council resolutions, raising tensions and that it risks destabilizing the security situation in the region and beyond."

North Korea nuclear envoys from Seoul, Tokyo and Washington also issued a strong condemnation. Seoul's chief nuclear negotiator, Kim Guna, and his U.S. and Japanese counterparts, Sung Kim and Takehiro Funakoshi, had a conference call after Pyongyang announced the launch, and urged the North to stop its provocations and return to talks for denuclearization.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also released a statement criticizing the North for using ballistic missile technology, which is contrary to the relevant Security Council resolutions.

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