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Seoul remains on alert over NK's spy satellite launch

By No Dong-hwan
nohdh@dongwha.com

The South Korean government is on high alert over North Korea's plan to launch in the coming weeks what it claims to be a rocket carrying a military spy satellite.

Seoul warned that Pyongyang will pay the price for the launch, which is banned under U.N. Security Council resolutions since it uses ballistic missile technology.

The National Security Council (NSC) held a meeting following a Japanese news report earlier in the day that Pyongyang had notified Tokyo of its plan to put its first military reconnaissance satellite in geosynchronous orbit between May 31 and June 11.

Chaired by National Security Adviser Cho Tae-yong, the NSC meeting discussed related countermeasures and relayed relevant information to President Yoon Suk Yeol. The National Security Office said the government was closely monitoring related developments.

Shortly after the meeting, Seoul's Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issued a statement urging the North to give up the satellite launch plan.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lim Soo-suk said North Korea's envisaged plan violates UNSC resolutions

that ban Pyongyang from using ballistic missile technology which is also used to launch space rockets carrying satellites.

"We strongly warn Pyongyang to stop threatening the peace in the region and demand they immediately call off the plan," the spokesperson said in the statement. "Our government will prepare a tight-knit defense network in cooperation with the United States and Japan against military provocations by North Korea."

Earlier on Monday, Japanese media reported that North Korea informed the International Maritime Organization of its plan for the satellite launch.

In response to the notification, the Japanese government began mobilizing Patriot surface-to-air missile systems in the country's southern Okinawa Prefecture and alerted military and national security authorities as well as vessels moving around the southwestern waters of Japan over the likely North Korean move, according to reports.

The Kim Jong-un regime announced earlier this month that his country completed preparations to mount its first military spy satellite on a rocket, raising speculation that the North's launch could take place as early as June.

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Korea eyes launch of 4th Nuri rocket in 2025

By Baek Byung-youl
baekb@koreatimes.co.kr

Korea's science ministry aims to launch the next Nuri space rocket in 2025, aiming to send a next-generation medium-size satellite into space. In the third launch of the domestically developed rocket, also known as Korean Space Launch Vehicle II (KSLV II), it successfully placed NEXTSAT-2, a small satellite weighing 179.9 kilograms, in geosynchronous orbit on May 25.

The Ministry of Science and ICT said Monday that the fourth Nuri launch will put a much larger 500-kilogram satellite in orbit.

Korea has tried to put next-generation medium-sized satellites in orbit twice — the first one was launched in March 2021 by Russia's Soyuz launch vehicle from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, and the second one was scheduled to be launched in September 2022, also on a Russian launch vehicle, but was canceled due to the Russia-Ukraine war.

The medium-sized satellite will be developed by Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI), while the previous two were co-developed by the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) and KAI, a private company.

The planned medium-size satellite will be used to conduct cell culture experiments in space, measuring space plasma and magnetic fields and demonstrating a wide-field



A Nuri space rocket blasts off from Nam Space Center in Goheung, South Jeolla Province, Thursday.

Yonhap

atmospheric light observation camera for space.

"As the only company in Korea that has performed the entire process, we are very proud of the success of the May 25 launch," a KAI spokesperson said. "We will contribute to the successful fourth, fifth and sixth KSLV launches through detailed process management and strict quality control."

The fifth and sixth Nuri launches, scheduled for 2026 and 2027, will carry ultra-small satellites weighing

less than 100 kilograms. They will carry high-resolution cameras capable of distinguishing objects one meter in size on the Earth's surface.

The rocket set for launch in 2027 is likely to carry satellites with robotic arms, which the science ministry plans to develop in the near future. These satellites will use their robotic arms to collect space debris, such as obsolete satellites.

At a meeting of the Space Development Promotion Working Committee in March, the ministry said

it plans to develop technologies to enable rendezvous and docking with satellites using robotic arms, adding it will conduct a test in space by 2027.

"We have submitted a budget proposal to the National Assembly that includes a plan to load a satellite with robotic arms on the Nuri space rocket to be launched in 2027. If the budget proposal is passed, the development plan of the satellite will be finalized," a ministry spokesman said.

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Pyongyang also released news that Kim inspected a committee responsible for preparing for the launch of the military reconnaissance satellite and approved its "future action plan."

Japan's maritime security authority warned that satellite debris, should the launch take place, will likely fall in two spots in waters west of the country or one in the eastern waters of the Philippines, according to NHK. The broadcaster said the three spots are all out-

side of Japan's exclusive economic zones.

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida criticized the North Korean satellite launch as a violation of UNSC resolutions. He said Japan's Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada ordered the country's military force to destroy the satellite's debris once they fall into Japanese waters.

The North's spy satellite launch plan came after Seoul succeeded last Thursday in launching a locally-developed space rocket called Nuri that placed satellites in geosynchronous orbit at an altitude of 550 kilometers.