

# Malfunction delays South Korea satellite launch

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The Korea Space Launch Vehicle-1, South Korea's second space rocket, sits on its launch pad at the Naro Space Center in Goheung, South Korea, Tuesday, June 8, 2010. The rocket is scheduled to blast off on June 9. The launch of the first rocket last August failed due to problems in fairing assembly. The Korean letters on the rocket read: "Republic of Korea." (AP Photo/ Korea Pool)

(AP) -- South Korea's space program suffered a setback Wednesday when the planned launch of a satellite was postponed due to malfunctioning firefighting equipment.

The two-stage Naro rocket was supposed to blast off in the late afternoon carrying an [observation satellite](#) to study global warming and climate change.

The process was halted, however, after fire retardant suddenly sprayed from one of three nozzles set up near the launch pad to extinguish any blaze, said Pyun Kyung-bum, a spokesman at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

Cable news channel YTN showed white fire retardant spewing out and dozens of engineers later checking the [launch pad](#).

The first stage of the two-stage rocket was designed and built by Russia and the second by [South Korea](#). Experts from the two countries were trying to find the cause of the problem and planned to consult on a new launch date, Pyun said.

The planned [liftoff](#) at the coastal Naro [space](#) center in Goheung, 290 miles (465 kilometers) south of Seoul, would have been the country's second launch of a rocket from its own territory. In the first attempt last August, the satellite failed to go into orbit because one of its two covers apparently failed to come off after liftoff.

Since 1992, South Korea has launched 11 satellites from overseas sites, all on foreign-made rockets.

The launch preparations came amid heightened tension on the Korean peninsula after South Korea referred [North Korea](#) to the U.N. Security Council over the sinking of a navy ship that killed 46 South Korean sailors.

North Korea - which denies involvement in the sinking - has threatened to retaliate against South Korea for taking it to the U.N. body, saying the

South's action will intensify military tension and could trigger a war.

There was no immediate North Korean reaction to the planned launch by South Korea. Last year, North Korea said it would closely watch the international response to South Korea's launch after a North Korean rocket launch drew a U.N. rebuke.

North Korea has developed a variety of missiles and launched a long-range rocket from a domestic site in April last year in defiance of international warnings. It said the rocket carried a satellite into orbit as part of a peaceful space development program, but the U.S. and its allies said nothing reached space and the launch was actually a test of long-range missile technology.

North Korea, unlike the South, is banned from any ballistic missile activity by U.N. Security Council resolutions as part of efforts to eliminate its nuclear and long-range missile programs.

The two Koreas are still technically at war because the 1950-53 Korean conflict ended with a cease-fire, not a peace treaty.

The Science Ministry said South Korea plans to develop a space launch vehicle with its own technology by 2020.

China, Japan and India are Asia's current space powers. Japan has launched numerous satellites while China sent its first astronaut into space in 2003 and carried out its first spacewalk in 2008.

India launched a satellite into moon orbit in 2008, but had to abandon it nearly a year later after communication links snapped and scientists lost control of it.

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