

NKorea launch pad expansion 'nearing completion'

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A U.S. research institute says construction to upgrade North Korea's main rocket launch pad should be completed by fall, allowing Pyongyang (pyuhng-yahng) to conduct a launch by year's end if it decides to do so.

The U.S.-Korea Institute at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies is basing its conclusions on commercial satellite imagery of the west coast site of Sohae. The latest photo is from Aug. 8.

The institute says [construction](#) is nearing completion at the launch pad to handle larger rockets than the Unha-3 that was blasted into space from Sohae in December 2012.

The findings are being published Thursday on the institute's website, 38 North.

North Korea has test-fired short-range missiles this year, but it remains unclear whether it's planning another long-range [rocket launch](#).

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