Beat: News

North Korea to launch long-range rocket later this month

-, 02.12.2012, 04:37 Time

USPA News - North Korea will this month attempt for a second time to launch a long-range rocket carrying a satellite, the government announced on Saturday, sparking condemnation from other countries who say the launch violates UN resolutions. In a statement carried by the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), an unidentified spokesman for the Korean Committee for Space Technology said the country intends to launch a second version of the Kwangmyongsong-3 (Bright Star-3) weather satellite between December 10 and December 22. The Earth observation satellite will sit on top of a long-range Unha-3 rocket which will launch from the Sohae Satellite Launching Station in Cholsan county of North Pyongan province, which is located in the western region of North Korea near the Yellow Sea.

The exact launch date was not revealed. "Scientists and technicians of the DPRK analyzed the mistakes that were made during the previous April launch and deepened the work of improving the reliability and precision of the satellite and carrier rocket, thereby rounding off the preparations for launch," the committee spokesman said, referring to North Korea by its official name. The spokesman said a safe flight path has been chosen to avoid any potential debris from affecting other countries in the region. But Japanese Defense Minister Satoshi Morimoto nonetheless ordered his forces to take "all necessary measures", including the deployment of interceptor missiles. "The planned launch of a missile, which North Korea calls a satellite-carrying rocket, will violate the UN Security Council`s resolutions and presidential statement," Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda told reporters on Saturday. He added that, as a result, his government would postpone next week`s senior-level talks with North Korea. Other countries also condemned the announcement, including South Korea where officials described the planned launch as a "grave provocation" and a test of a long-range missile in disguise. British Foreign Secretary William Hague and U.S. State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland called on North Korea to abandon the plan. "The UN Security Council made clear in April that any attempts by North Korea to launch a satellite using ballistic missile technology would be a serious violation of UN Security Council resolution 1874. We therefore call on North Korean authorities to abandon this plan," Hague said. "Failure to do so must lead to a further response by the international community, and will damage the prospects for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula." Nuland, who said the U.S. is consulting with key allies on next steps, added that a satellite launch would be a "highly provocative" act. "Devoting scarce resources to the development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles will only further isolate and impoverish North Korea," she said. "The path to security for North Korea lies in investing in its people and abiding by its commitments and international obligations." Earlier this week, satellite operator DigitalGlobe Inc. revealed that North Korea could launch a long-range missile by mid-December after satellite images showed a marked increase in activity at the Sohae Satellite Launching Station. The images showed a new tent, trucks, people, numerous portable fuel/oxidizer tanks, and other equipment. DigitalGlobe said the activity was consistent with launch preparations as witnessed prior to the failed launch at the same site on April 13. The Taepodong-2 ballistic missile carried the Kwangmyongsong-3 weather satellite but failed about a minute after takeoff, causing debris to land in the Yellow Sea. The international community condemned the attempted rocket launch in April, calling it a violation of United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolutions and a threat to regional security. North Korea claimed the launch was to mark the 100th birth anniversary of the late North Korean leader Kim Il-sung, but observers said the country likely wanted to use the event to test its missile technology.

Article online:
https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-295/north-korea-to-launch-long-range-rocket-later-this-month.html

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