

North Korea's Space Program Advances with Spy Satellite Launch

written by Ezba Walayat | November 27, 2023



Introduction

North Korea claims to have successfully launched a reconnaissance satellite into orbit on November 22, 2023 and stated that Kim was looking over pictures of US military facilities on Guam in a within hours of the launch. North Korea has successfully launched its first spy satellite into orbit, defying international condemnation from the US and its allies. The North Korean government has said that the recent satellite will help the country to better monitor its neighbor and that it is essential for dealing with perceived threats from South Korea and the US.

Condemnation of North Korea's Satellite Launch

The United States, Japan, and South Korea have all criticized the launch and urged North Korea to follow UN resolutions. North Korea is prohibited by UN Security Council resolutions from launching ballistic missiles or employing space launch vehicles. The launch by North Korea using ballistic missile technology is strongly condemned by the G7 Foreign Ministers, and said that it poses a serious danger to regional and international peace and security. Any launch that makes use of ballistic missile technology is blatantly in violation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions, regardless of whether it has been classified as a military reconnaissance satellite. As a result of the launch, Seoul partially suspended and Pyongyang entirely suspended the 2018 joint military agreement that was meant to stabilize cross-border relations, has further escalated tensions on the peninsula.



A rocket carrying a spy satellite Malligyong-1 is prepared to be launched, as North Korean government claims, in a location given as North Gyeongsang Province, North Korea in this handout picture obtained by Reuters on November 21, 2023. KCNA via REUTERS

North Korea's Response

After North Korea launched its first-ever military spy satellite, the country's leader, Kim Jong Un, welcomed a "new era of a space power." For North Korea's space program, the successful launch of the Malligyong-1 satellite marks an important milestone. It shows that North Korea is able to design and launch satellites with potential military applications. Concerns are also raised by the launch regarding North Korea's possible use of its space program to create advanced weapons like intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). The Malligyong-1 satellite's launch coincides with heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula. North Korea has conducted a series of missile tests in recent months, raising fears that it is preparing for a nuclear test. According to Korean Central News Agency (KCNA), the space agency plans to launch several spy satellites soon to ensure that it can monitor South Korea and other areas that the North Korean military finds interesting. Moreover, as per KCNA, Kim stated during a visit to the national space agency that the launch was a full-fledged exercise of the right to self-defense.