

North Korea vows to launch more satellites into orbit

North Korea vowed to launch more satellites into space Monday, in what the United States and the U.N. view as a covert test of the reclusive regime's ballistic missile technology.

The nation says its five-year space development program is aimed at helping to improve its economy.

"Some countries have manipulated U.N. sanctions resolutions against us and hindered the sovereign country's space development. It is not a tolerable act," the state-run Rodong Sinmun newspaper said. "It is a global trend that a country seeks the economic growth with the space program."

The plan to launch satellites is seen as an attempt by Pyongyang to build a case to potentially launch a long-range rocket, South Korean news agency Yonhap reported. The North fired long-range rockets in 2012 and 2016.

Ballistic missiles and the rockets used to launch satellites have similar bodies, engines and other technology.

North Korea's deputy U.N. ambassador Kim In Ryong announced North Korea's plan for 2016-2020 to develop "practical satellites that can contribute to the economic development and improvement of the people's living" at a U.N. General Assembly committee meeting earlier this month.

He said the U.S. was "going frantic to illegalize our development of outer space," by claiming it violated U.N. sanctions.

Kim said no U.N. article states that satellite launches threaten international peace and security, "nor is there any article stipulating that one cannot use ballistic rocket technology in launching a satellite."

"The U.S. is the country that launched the largest number of satellites and yet it claims that our launch of satellites is a threat to international peace and security," Kim said. "This is a preposterous allegation and extreme double standards."

Kim said North Korea launched its first pilot communications satellite, Kwangmyongsong-1, in August 1998. He said his country “entered the practical satellite developing stage” with the successful entry into orbit of Kwangmyongsong-4 in February 2016.

North Korea has not made any provocations since it conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test on Sept. 3. Earlier in the summer, it launched missiles over Japan and test-launched two intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Meanwhile, South Korean newspaper JoongAng Ilbo newspaper reported that Chinese police arrested two North Korean agents in Beijing on suspicion of plotting to murder Kim Han Sol, the 22-year-old nephew of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Kim Han Sol’s father Kim Jong Nam — Kim Jong Un’s half-brother — was assassinated at the Kuala Lumpur Airport in Malaysia on Feb. 13. Two women are currently on trial for murder, which they deny. Four other suspects including the alleged mastermind of the plot remain at large.

Source: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2017/10/30/north-korea-vows-launch-more-satellites-into-orbit/812313001/>

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