

## North Korea

## Failed Launch Is Setback For New Leader

BY JEAN H. LEE  
Associated Press

PYONGYANG, North Korea — North Korea's much-touted satellite launch ended in a nearly \$1 billion failure, bringing humiliation to the country's new young leader and condemnation from a host of nations. The United Nations Security Council deplored the launch but stopped short of imposing new penalties in response.

The satellite's disintegration Friday over the Yellow Sea brought a rare public acknowledgment of failure from Pyongyang, which had hailed the launch as a show of strength amid North Korea's persistent economic hardship.

For the 20-something Kim Jong Un it was to have been a highlight of the celebratory events surrounding his ascension to top political power. It was timed to coincide with the country's biggest holiday in decades, the 100th birthday of North Korean founder Kim Il Sung, the young leader's grandfather.

The United States and South Korea declared the early morning launch a failure minutes after the rocket shot out from the North's west coast. North Korea acknowledged its demise four hours later in an announcement broadcast on state TV, saying the satellite the rocket was carrying did not enter

## Launch fail

A rocket launched Friday by North Korea crashed less than two minutes into flight.



orbit.

The launch brought swift international condemnation, including the suspension of U.S. food aid, and raised concerns that the North's next move could be even more provocative — a nuclear test, the country's third.

The U.N. Security Council denounced the launch as a violation of two resolutions that prohibit North Korea from developing its nuclear and missile programs, and met behind closed doors to

consider a response. U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice, the current council president, refused to speculate on what action the council might take. The council imposed sanctions on North Korea after its first nuclear test in 2006 and stepped up sanctions after its second in 2009.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, a former South Korean foreign minister, called the launch "deplorable" and urged North Korea "not to undertake any further provocative actions that will heighten tension in the region," U.N. spokesman Martin Nesirky said.

Despite Friday's failed launch, Pyongyang pressed ahead with grandiose propaganda in praise of the ruling Kim family.

Hours after the explosion, the young Kim was installed as the new head of the powerful National Defense Commission during a meeting of the Supreme People's Assembly in Pyongyang. It was the last of the top military and party posts intended to consolidate his power after the death of his father, longtime leader Kim Jong Il, four months ago.

At a massive gathering later Friday, Kim Jong Un and other senior officials watched the unveiling of an enormous new statue of Kim Jong Il, which stood beside an equally massive one of Kim Il Sung.

North Korea had trumpeted

the launch of its Kwangmyong-song, or Bright Shining Star, satellite as a scientific achievement and a gift for its late founder. It cost the impoverished nation some \$850 million, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency, which estimated the cost of the rocket and its payload alone at \$450 million.

In downtown Pyongyang, university student Kim Kwang Jin was optimistic despite Friday's failure.

"I'm not too disappointed. There was always the chance of failure," he said. "Other nations — including China and Russia — have had failures while building their space programs so why wouldn't we? I hope that in the future, we're able to build a better satellite."

The rocket's destruction suggests the country has yet to master the technology needed to build long-range missiles that could threaten the United States. Still, worries remain about North Korea's nuclear program amid reports that it may be planning an atomic test soon.

The launch was condemned by the foreign ministers of the Group of Eight industrialized nations meeting in Washington, including Russia, while Washington said it was suspending plans to contribute food aid to the North in exchange for a rollback of its nuclear programs.

## Romney: Obama Will Erode Gun Owners' Rights

BY CHARLES BABINGTON  
Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — The presidential campaign briefly veered from the emotional Mommy Wars on Friday to the back-burner issue of gun rights, with Mitt Romney telling the National Rifle Association that President Barack Obama is not protecting gun owners — even though the topic has rarely arisen during his time in office.

Without offering details, Romney said that Obama would like to erode gun owners' rights.

"We need a president who will enforce current laws, not create new ones that only serve to burden lawful gun owners," Romney told thousands of NRA members in St. Louis for their annual convention. "President Obama has not. I will."

Obama has said relatively little about firearms, deeply disappointing gun-control groups. Obama campaign spokesman Ben LaBolt said the president's record "makes clear the he supports and respects the Second Amendment, and we'll fight back against any attempts to mislead voters."

The gathering of gun enthusiasts comes as Romney, the presumptive GOP nominee, is trying to woo conservative groups to consolidate his base after fending off challengers on his right. His relationship with gun owner groups is uneasy.

Running for the Senate in 1994, Romney said: "I don't line up with the NRA." A decade later he became a lifetime NRA member.

The NRA convention is a must-do for any Republican candidate. But this week it interrupted a new campaign narrative that Romney would like to extend: the view that



CHRISTIAN GOODEN/ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH/MCT  
**Presumptive Republican Presidential nominee Mitt Romney speaks at the Leadership Forum of the national NRA convention at America's Center in downtown St. Louis, Missouri, Friday, April 13, 2012.**

top Democrats look down on stay-at-home moms.

Romney used the NRA setting, in the domed arena where the St. Louis Rams play football, to make his first public comments on the topic. He brought a central player and key supporter: his wife, Ann, who stayed home to raise their five sons.

Democratic activist Hilary Rosen set off the tempest Wednesday by telling CNN that Ann Romney never worked a day in her life. The ensuing uproar knocked Democrats off their message that Republicans are insufficiently concerned about women's rights, including access to birth control.

In St. Louis, Mitt Romney began his 24-minute speech by calling his wife "a hero" and "my sweetheart," adding: "I happen to believe all moms are working moms."

Ann Romney praised working fathers as well as mothers, then

left the stage to her husband and his appeal to the gun-rights group.

Mitt Romney told the group: "We need a president who will stand up for the rights of hunters, sportsmen, and those seeking to protect their homes and their families. President Obama has not; I will."

Asked for details to support the claims, Romney's campaign said Obama has appointed judges, including Supreme Court Justices Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor, who have supported moves such as placing temporary limits on importing semiautomatic assault weapons. The campaign said Attorney General Eric Holder has not adequately backed people's rights to own and use firearms.

But gun-control groups such as the Brady Center to Prevent Gun Violence have expressed dismay over the lack of attention to their concerns. In its most recent assessment, in 2010, the group flunked on Obama on all seven issues it deemed important.

Campaigning in 2008, Obama said: "I believe in people's lawful right to bear arms. ... There are some commonsense gun safety laws that I believe in. But I am not going to take your guns away."

Dan Gross, president of the Brady group, said he is happy that Obama recently spoke in support of the family of Florida shooting victim Trayvon Martin and called for more national dialogue on gun violence following last year's shooting of then-Rep. Gabriel Giffords, D-Ariz., which killed six people.

"Our disappointment is that his voice is really yet to be heard in that conversation," Gross said. He said Romney is pandering to the NRA, a group he accuses of abetting the killings of thousands of people.

Neither Romney nor other NRA speakers — former presidential contender Rick Santorum and still-trying candidate Newt Gingrich were among them — alluded to the high-profile Martin case. A volunteer neighborhood watchman has been charged with second-degree murder for fatally shooting the unarmed teenager, who was walking in a gated community.

## Syrian Truce Largely Holds, But 6 Killed

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian forces used live fire, tear gas and clubs to beat back tens of thousands of protesters who took to the streets across the country Friday in powerful and often jubilant displays of defiance. But a U.N.-brokered truce largely held up without the widespread, bloody offensives that have pushed the nation toward civil war.

Activists said security forces killed at least six people, a lower-than-usual toll. The rallies, described as some of the largest in months, stretched from the suburbs of Damascus to the central province of Hama, Idlib in the north and the southern province of Daraa, where the uprising began in March 2011.

"Come on, Bashar, leave!" the crowd shouted in Daraa, linking arms and stomping their feet to the beat of a drum in a traditional Arab folk dance, according to a video posted online by activists.

The protests might have been far larger had President Bashar Assad's regime not violated a key aspect of the truce by keeping troops, tanks and snipers in population centers instead of pulling them back to barracks. The presence of plainclothes agents of the feared Mukhabarat security service also had a chilling effect on some of the gatherings in Damascus, the capital, and elsewhere.

The demonstrations were a critical test of the cease-fire, which went into effect at dawn Thursday, because they challenged the government's commitment to avoid the kind of attacks that have made Syria one of the bloodiest conflicts of the Arab Spring revolts.

## Prosecutors: Zimmerman Didn't Use Racial Slur

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Despite what some people think they heard, prosecutors say George Zimmerman did not utter a racial slur in his call to 911 on the night he shot Trayvon Martin.

The disputed words on the recording turned out to be "these f— punks," prosecutors said in an affidavit filed Thursday in support of the murder charges brought against the neighborhood watch volunteer in the Feb. 26 slaying of the unarmed black teenager.

In yet another passage in the affidavit that caught the attention of those watching the racially charged case, prosecutors said Zimmerman "profiled" Martin just before the shooting. The document did not elaborate, and a spokeswoman for special prosecutor Angela Corey on Friday refused to explain it.

But legal experts warned that "profiling" does not necessarily mean "racial profiling." "Profiling" is a common law enforcement practice of using a set of facts and circumstances to determine whether someone may be committing a crime. Police typically look at a person's behavior and appearance, as well as other factors.

In the Martin case, Zimmerman told a police dispatcher: "This guy looks like he is up to no good. He is on drugs or something." Zimmerman reported that the teenager had his hand in his waistband and was walking around, looking at homes in the gated community in Sanford, which had had several break-ins in the past year.

## Newark Mayor Saves Constituent From Fire

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — In a smoky stairwell, with embers falling from the ceiling and his neighbor slung over his shoulder, Cory Booker called it his "proverbial come to Jesus moment."

The mayor of New Jersey's largest city was carrying out a constituent he had rushed into a burning home to save, first pushing aside security detail who tried to hold him back by his belt. He didn't feel like a hero: "I felt terror," he told reporters on Friday, speaking with a burned, bandaged right hand.

The 42-year-old mayor, who has dug out snowbound residents in a blizzard, lived in a rundown housing project to make a point and tagged along on police patrols to lecture drug dealers, took on a new status Friday: the politician who can do almost anything.

Thousands took to Twitter, calling Booker Superman and inviting him to solve the North Korean missile crisis or run for president. The governor called it a "brave move" and the fire director said the mayor was one of the most heroic men he'd ever met.

Booker, standing in front of the boarded-up home Friday, said, "I did what any neighbor would do — help a neighbor."

## Vt. Gov. Chased By 4 Bears In His Backyard

MONTPELIER, Vt. (AP) — A late-night encounter with four bears trying to snack from backyard birdfeeders gave Vermont's governor a lesson in what not to do in bear country.

One of the bears chased Peter Shumlin and nearly caught the governor while he was trying to shoo the animals away, he said Friday.

"I had a close encounter with a bear, four bears to be exact," Shumlin said.

Shumlin said he had just gone to bed inside his rented home on the edge of Montpelier late Wednesday when the bears woke him up. He looked out the window and saw the bears in a tree about five feet from the house trying to get food from his four birdfeeders.

"I open up the window and yell at them to get away from the birdfeeders. They kind of trot off," Shumlin said Friday. "I go around to the kitchen to turn the lights on and look from the other side and they're back in the birdfeeders. So I figure I've got to get the birdfeeders out of there or they're going to make this a habit."

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**Virginia Larson (and Merle Larson too)**