

Japan to deploy 'Son of Star Wars'

by UPI

TOKYO - Japan is preparing to become the first country to deploy a ship-based, long-range missile defense system as North Korea apparently readies a missile test.

The controversial system, dubbed "Son of Star Wars," has been installed aboard Japanese naval destroyers which are set to be dispatched to areas off North Korea should Pyongyang move ahead with an anticipated rocket launch, Japanese officials told The Times of London Tuesday.

Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada said the anti-missile missiles could be fired if the North Korean rocket, instead of soaring high over Japan as expected, malfunctions and threatens any of Japan's islands.

"If it is capable of reaching Japan then it goes without saying that we will react," Hamada told The Times. "We have been making preparations, including BMD (ballistic missile defense), for any incident which could affect Japan. If it will affect Japan then it will be our target."

The Kyodo news agency reported that two destroyers equipped with SM-3 missiles -- designed to intercept an incoming ballistic missile midway through its course -- will be sent to the Sea of Japan.

The move could have numerous strategic implications for the northeast Asian region, analysts said.

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