

Japan disputes missile defense report

by UPI

TOKYO -- Senior Japanese officials say they disagree with a media report contending the country wouldn't be able to intercept a missile fired from North Korea.

The officials were responding to a media report published Monday quoting an anonymous government source as saying that if a rocket launch planned by North Korea next month is a intercontinental ballistic missile, rather than a communications satellite as claimed by Pyongyang, Japan's missile defense shield would be unable to hit it, the Japanese news agency Kyodo reported.

"I don't have any such concern because the government has taken steps to respond to the matter well," Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura said Tuesday, adding that Tokyo has taken "every possible scenario" into account to ensure the country's safety.

"We are at the final stage of reviewing (options) right now," he said, while Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada also disputed the report, saying, "I don't think that will be the case because we have been trying to be well prepared."

The source quoted in the report said a missile interceptor test-launched from a Japanese destroyer had only been successful because military officials had been warned when to expect a mock attack, Kyodo said.

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