

All Systems Go for Glonass After Launch Success

By [The Moscow Times](#)

October 04, 2011



Engineers working on a new Glonass-K satellite on Tuesday, which will replace the generation currently in use. **Ilya Naymushin**

Russia successfully launched a navigation satellite that will complete a global system to rival the U.S. Global Positioning System and give a much-needed boost to the beleaguered Russian space program.

The early Monday morning launch from Russia's northern Plesetsk Cosmodrome was the first Soyuz rocket launch since a Russian unmanned cargo flight to the International Space Station fell back to Earth in burning pieces in a failed August launch.

Russia is struggling to return confidence in its commercial launch capacity as a partner in the orbital space station after a series of botched launches.

When the navigation satellite becomes active in about a month, the Glonass global navigation

system will be "fully complete," the Russian space agency quoted its deputy head Anatoly Shilov as saying on its web site.

The launch completes a constellation of 24 satellites needed to fully bring online Russia's answer to the U.S.-built GPS.

Moscow has spent \$2 billion over the last decade in developing the Glonass system from Cold War technology used to guide Soviet missiles.

It hopes that the system, which has both civilian and military uses, will deliver what Prime Minister Vladimir Putin has called "satellite navigation sovereignty" and help spur the development of domestic consumer devices.

The series of costly failed launches has fuelled worries among international partners over reliance on Russia as the only means to ferry astronauts to and from the space station since NASA retired its space shuttle earlier this year.

Russia blamed the failure of the Progress rocket launch in August on a blockage in a kerosene fuel line and has set a new Progress launch for Oct. 30.

That launch will be closely watched as the last test run of the Soyuz rocket before a new astronaut trio blasts off for the space station on Nov. 14 from the Russian-leased launch pad in the southern Kazakh city of Baikonur.

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