

Russia Orbits 3 Telecoms Satellites

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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PLESETSK — Russia has orbited three communications satellites, a Defense Ministry spokesman said Thursday.

"The Rokot carrier rocket, launched today at 3:23 a.m. from the Plesetsk state space launch site, successfully put three Gonets-M communications satellites into the final orbit in due time," Colonel Alexei Zolotukhin said.

The launch followed a nine-month suspension due to attempts to fix a glitch in the rocket's booster, Zolotukhin said Wednesday.

All launches of Rokots were suspended in January after the rocket's Briz-KM booster failed to deliver three military satellites into their designated orbits, resulting in the loss of one of the satellites.

The light-class Rokot launch vehicle is a modified version of the Russian RS-18 (SS-19 Stiletto) intercontinental ballistic missile. It uses the two original lower stages of the ICBM,

in conjunction with an upper-stage block containing the Breeze-KM booster and space-bound payloads.

The ministry said that prior to the current launch a total of 16 Rokot launches were carried out from the Plesetsk site since the first launch on May 16, 2000.

The Gonets-M satellites will be part of Russia's low-orbit grouping of telecoms satellites designed to provide communications services for remote areas of Russia.

Before today's blastoff, the grouping consisted of three Gonets-M and two Gonets-D1 satellites.

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