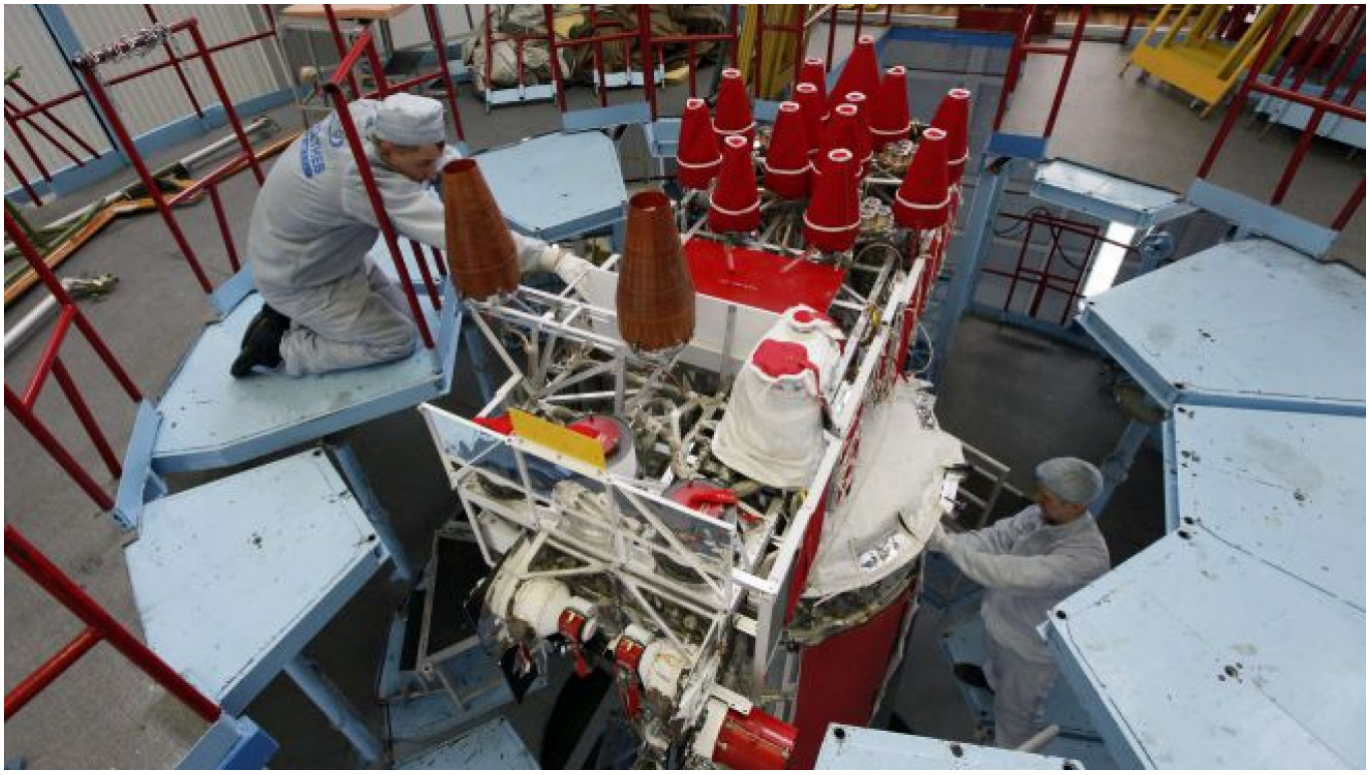
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Russia Eager to Set Up Glonass Monitoring Stations in 36 Countries

By Matthew Bodner

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Fitters of space apparatus work on the GLONASS-M space navigation satellite inside an assembly workshop of the Reshetnev Information Satellite Systems company.

Russia plans to make its Glonass satellite navigation system more competitive by constructing 50 new ground stations in 36 countries, a senior Kremlin official said Wednesday.

The Glonass system was launched to provide Russia with its own navigation data for military and civilian applications, and to secure a cut of the commercial benefits currently enjoyed by the U.S.'s Global Positioning System, or GPS.



Maxim Stulov / Vedomosti

Sergei Ivanov speaking on Glonass

GPS can currently deliver navigation data with an accuracy of 1.8 meters, while Glonass is accurate to 2.9 meters, and Russia is keen to make up ground, Kremlin chief of staff Sergei Ivanov said.

"GPS is still ahead of us, but the gap continues to shrink. We will catch up," Ivanov said at the International Satellite Navigation Forum in Moscow, Interfax reported.

"To do this, we will create ground stations abroad. In the long term, or ideally, we would like to have about 50 stations in 36 countries," he added.

At present, Glonass only has foreign ground stations in Antarctica and Brazil and Ivanov said that building more of them will greatly expand the penetration of Glonass on global markets.

A request by Russia's Federal Space Agency to place ground stations in the U.S. was opposed by the CIA and the Department of Defense, the chief concern being that they could be used for spying on U.S. soil, The New York Times reported last November.

The U.S. operates GPS ground stations throughout the world, but not in Russia.

Russia has been developing its own satellite navigation system since 1976, completing the first stage of the Glonass system in 1995, but due to a lack of funding it was not brought online.

In 2001 President Vladimir Putin said Glonass was a project of national importance and called for efforts to be redoubled to refurbish and complete the system.

See also:

Glonass Setting Up 2nd Brazilian Ground Station

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