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# $1 Billion Satellite Project to Use Russia's Vostochny Cosmodrome

By The Moscow Times

June 26, 2015




President Vladimir Putin visits the construction site at Vostochny Cosmodrome in the Amursk Region.

Russia's new Vostochny Cosmodrome has booked its first high-profile commercial satellite launches as part of a contract worth more than $1 billion between Russian space agency Roscosmos and French and British space companies, news agency TASS reported Friday.

French space launch provider Arianespace on Thursday announced it would purchase 21 Russian-built Soyuz rockets to launch between 650 and 720 microsatellites built by British firm OneWeb. The satellites will provide Internet services to all corners of the globe.

The news is a major boost to Russia's space industry, which has suffered a series of embarrassing launch failures in recent years.

The contract is the largest in commercial space history, valued at $1-2 billion, according to SpaceNews. The first batch of 10 pilot satellites will be launched on a Soyuz rocket in late 2017.

The remaining 20 launches will take place over 2017-19 and carry between 32 and 36 satellites each, SpaceNews reported Thursday.

Some of the rockets will take off from Russia's $3 billion Vostochny Cosmodrome, which is under construction in the country's Far East, a Roscosmos spokesman was quoted by TASS as saying Friday. The exact number of launches from Vostochny was not specified in the report.

Arianespace CEO Stephane Israel was quoted by SpaceNews on Thursday as saying that 15 of the launches would take place at Roscosmos' current primary launch facility — the Soviet-built Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan — beginning in 2017.

OneWeb's project will make use of Vostochny and other Soyuz launch facilities around the world, such as Russia's northern Plesetsk Cosmodrome and a Soyuz launchpad at the European Space Agency's spaceport in South America, according to Arianespace and Roscosmos.

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