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Russia's Satellite Nuclear Warning System Down Until November

By The Moscow Times

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Russia's Aerospace Defense Forces was expected to launch the first satellite in a brand new early warning net, known as the "United Space System," or EKS, in July.

Russia has delayed the launch of a new military satellite system by four months, news agency TASS reported Wednesday, leaving Moscow nearly blind in the event of a nuclear missile attack till at least November.

Russia's decaying constellation of Soviet-designed early warning satellites was left nearly blind last year, when one of the three remaining units malfunctioned. The remaining two satellites were taken offline in January, leaving Russian decision-makers reliant on land-based radar systems to detect incoming missiles.

Radar systems, however, give far less warning than the satellites of incoming strikes, as radar can only detect objects within a set range.

Russia's Aerospace Defense Forces, the branch of the military that operates early warning satellites, was expected to launch the first satellite in a brand new early warning net, known as the "United Space System," or EKS, in July. But the first launch is now slated for November, TASS reported.

"Today we are nearly prepared to launch the first satellite into a highly elliptic orbit, the launch of which will take place in November 2015," Major General Oleg Maidanovich, commander of the Aerospace Defense Forces, said Tuesday, TASS reported. Maidanovich did not explain why the launch was delayed.

The new system, which is closely integrated with ground-based early warning radars to provide an extensive picture of global missile launches, is expected to be fully operational in 2018. The complete satellite constellation will consist of 12 EKA satellites.

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