

Russia Developing New Space Reconnaissance System

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The  Moscow Times

Russia's Defense Ministry is developing a new space reconnaissance system to be deployed by 2019, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday.

The new spacecraft will be "head and shoulders above its predecessors," one of the newspaper's sources said. The vehicles will have much higher payload, high-speed radio and additional protection. The first is set to release in 2019, the second in 2022, and a third model with a two-meter diameter telescope in 2024.

The electro-optical system will use the latest Razdan satellites to replace the Persona models currently in use. Russia's space forces and the Progress State Research and Production Rocket Space Center have started consultations to engineer the satellites, Kommersant reported.

Russia's space industry has been back under the spotlight since the opening of the new

Vostochny Cosmodrome. Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin told reporters in May that Russia had fallen behind "ninefold" in the space race and "would never catch up to the United States." He has since retracted the comments.

The Persona satellites were originally planned to launch in 2003 but were continuously delayed, first appearing in orbit in 2008. Two of three Persona satellites remain in orbit, after the third one was lost due to an electronic failure. The satellites also work to gather reconnaissance for Russian military action in Syria.

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