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Russia Launches More UK Telecom Satellites into Space

By AFP

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Images released by Roscosmos showed the Soyuz rocket taking off against clear blue skies Thursday morning. **Roscosmos**

A Soyuz rocket blasted off from the Vostochny cosmodrome in Russia's Far East on Thursday carrying 36 UK telecommunications and internet satellites, the Roscosmos space agency said.

OneWeb, a London-headquartered company, is working to complete the construction of a constellation of low earth orbit satellites providing enhanced broadband and other services to countries around the world.

The company is competing in the race to provide fast internet for the world's remote areas via satellites along with tech billionaire Elon Musk and fellow billionaire Jeff Bezos of Amazon.

Images released by Roscosmos showed the Soyuz rocket taking off against clear blue skies Thursday morning at 02:47 GMT.

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Roscosmos said in a statement that the launch and separation "took place normally."

"We can confirm our sixth separation is complete. Over half our satellites have now been released!" OneWeb wrote on Twitter.

The UK company plans for its global commercial internet service to be operational by next year, supported by some 650 satellites.

OneWeb's first six satellites were launched by a Russian-made Soyuz rocket from the space center in Kourou in French Guiana in February 2019.

The company launched 68 more from the Baikanour launch site in Kazakhstan last year and another 36 from the Vostochny cosmodrome in December.

The Vostochny launch site is one of Russia's most important space projects, designed to reduce reliance on the Baikonur space centre Moscow currently rents from Kazakhstan.

Its construction has for years been tainted by multiple controversies including corruption, and the project has been consistently behind schedule.

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