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Russian Soyuz Rocket Launches 34 New U.K. Satellites

By AFP

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Roscosmos / TASS

A Russian Soyuz rocket has blasted into space carrying 34 new satellites from British operator OneWeb, which aims to provide broadband internet everywhere in the world.

The rocket, operated by Europe's Arianespace, took off at 18:07 GMT Tuesday from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, broadcast live by the Russian Roscosmos space agency.

"The launch went to plan," Roscosmos chief Dmitry Rogozin said on Telegram.

It was the sixth launch of OneWeb satellites this year, the last one having been on Aug. 22.

OneWeb is working to complete the construction of a constellation of low-earth orbit satellites providing enhanced broadband and other services to countries worldwide.

The company is competing against billionaires Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos in the race to provide

fast internet for the world's remote areas via satellites.

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

Arianespace, which has worked with Russia for close to two decades, is under contract to make 16 Soyuz launches between December 2020 and the end of 2022.

With this latest mission, a total of 288 satellites are now in orbit for the constellation.

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