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Russian Soyuz Rocket Launches 36 New U.K. Satellites

By AFP

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Yuri Smityuk / TASS

A Russian Soyuz rocket on Thursday blasted into space carrying 36 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 09:40 GMT from the Vostochny cosmodrome in Russia's the Far East, broadcast live by the country's Roscosmos space agency.

"LIFTOFF!" Roscosmos tweeted after the launch — the seventh this year carrying OneWeb satellites.

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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.

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 358 satellites are now in orbit for the constellation, Roscosmos said.

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