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Russia Launches Classified Military Satellite

By AFP

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Roscosmos

Russia on Thursday successfully placed into orbit a military satellite believed to be part of the Kremlin's early warning anti-missile system.

A Soyuz rocket carrying a classified payload blasted off from the Plesetsk cosmodrome in northern Russia in the early hours of Thursday morning, the Defense Ministry said.

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At 01:09 GMT a rocket was launched that put a "space apparatus into orbit in the interests of the Defense Ministry," the ministry said in a statement carried by the Interfax news agency.

It did not provide further details.

According to the Spaceflightnow website, which covers space launches, the launch could be delivering a Tundra satellite.

Russia has previously launched Tundra satellites in 2015, 2017 and 2019, according to Interfax.

Specialist website Russian Space Web said the ground track of Thursday's launch "matched previous missions" delivering satellites for Russia's missile warning system named Kupol or dome.

Unveiled in 2019, Kupol is designed to detect launches of ballistic missiles and track them to their landing site, though its exact configuration is unknown.

In 2018, the U.S., which suspects Russia of seeking to develop space weapons, said it was alarmed at the "very abnormal behavior" of a Russian satellite. Moscow dismissed what it called "unfounded allegations."

Last week, Russia faced an international backlash after its military destroyed a satellite creating a cloud of space debris that forced the crew on the International Space Station to take shelter.

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