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Russian Aerospace Company Launches First Batch of Starlink Rival Satellites

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1440.space

A Russian aerospace company has launched the first batch of low-orbit satellites that will eventually make up a vast satellite internet constellation under a project meant to rival SpaceX's Starlink, the business newspaper Kommersant reported Tuesday.

The first elements of the state-funded satellite constellation, known as Rassvet, were supposed to go up into space late last year, but delays pushed the start of the launch schedule back to this month.

Bureau 1440, the private aerospace company developing the network, told Kommersant that 16 satellites were launched into space on Monday evening.

The company said the satellites would undergo system checks before moving into their target orbit positions.

The satellite internet constellation is intended to provide broadband internet access across

Russia and serve as a domestic alternative to Starlink, owned by billionaire Elon Musk.

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Alexei Shelobkov, CEO of Bureau 1440's parent company, ICS Holding, told Kommersant that the next stage of Rassvet's deployment would involve dozens more launches.

Roscosmos chief Dmitry Bakanov previously said that more than 900 low-orbit satellites in the Rassvet network are scheduled to go into space by 2035. Commercial operations involving over 250 satellites in the constellation are expected to begin sometime next year.

For comparison, SpaceX's Starlink network has deployed more than 7,000 satellites in low Earth orbit since its first launches began in 2019.

The Russian government has earmarked 102.8 billion rubles ($1.26 billion) for the development of Rassvet. Bureau 1440 plans to invest an additional 329 billion rubles ($4 billion) of its own funds through 2030.

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