

Ariane launches two satellites

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Europe's Ariane 5-ECA rocket has successfully launched two new satellites into orbit.

The mission, which had been delayed three times because of technical problems with ground support equipment, was launched Saturday from the Kourou spaceport in French Guiana, the BBC reported.

The first satellite released -- the 3.7-ton Spainsat -- is the first Spanish satellite dedicated to secure government communications. The second

satellite -- the 4.1-ton Hot Bird 7A -- was launched for the Paris-based Eutelsat Communications, the BBC said.

Eutelsat Communications said Hot Bird 7A would transmit more than 850 television channels and 550 radio stations to 110 million homes in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East for the next 15 years.

Saturday's launch was the Ariane 5's first flight this year and only the fourth for the 780-ton heavy-lift version. It was the 170th of an Ariane rocket since the start of the French-led program in 1979, the BBC said.

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