

U.S.-Taiwan satellites to be launched

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Six satellites designed to improve weather forecasts and monitor climate change are ready for launch from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California.

A joint effort by the United States and Taiwan, a Minotaur rocket is scheduled to launch at 5:10 p.m. PDT Friday from the military base, about 50 miles north of Santa Barbara, Calif.

The low-orbiting satellites will be the first to provide atmospheric data daily and in real time over thousands of points on Earth for research and operational weather forecasting.

Called COSMIC -- for Constellation Observing System for Meteorology, Ionosphere and Climate -- in the United States, and FORMOSAT-3 in Taiwan, the \$100 million satellite network is the product of an agreement between the American Institute in Taiwan and the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States.

"The satellites will convert GPS measurements into a precise worldwide set of weather, climate and space weather data," said Jay Fein, program director in the U.S. National Science Foundation's Division of Atmospheric Sciences, which funded COSMIC. "The resulting new information will have a tremendous impact on geosciences research and weather prediction, and will be an important contribution to global Earth observations."

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