

Air Force launches surveillance satellite from Ca.

September 26 2010

(AP) -- A U.S. space surveillance satellite was launched late Saturday from the central California coast, the Air Force said.

A Minotaur 4 rocket carrying the [Space](#) Based Space Surveillance satellite blasted off at 9:41 p.m. Pacific time and headed toward [orbit](#), officials from Vandenberg Air Force Base said in a news release.

The satellite was designed to detect and monitor debris, satellites and other space objects that could be a threat to national security, communications and weather satellites.

Monitoring from space avoids the limitations that ground observing systems experience due to weather, the atmosphere and time of day.

Col. Richard Boltz, commander of the 30th Space Wing, said in a written statement that the satellite will "greatly enhance our existing space situational awareness," a move that is "vital to protecting our space-based assets."

"This evening's launch was our third in eight days," Boltz said. "I am extremely proud."

The satellite will be operated from Schriever [Air Force](#) Base, Colo.

The Boeing Co. is the overall program manager. The satellite was built by Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. in Boulder, Colo.

Minotaur [launch](#) vehicles are built by Orbital Sciences Corp. of Dalles, Va., using rocket motors from decommissioned Peacekeeper intercontinental ballistic missiles.

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