

Russia locates missing satellite: official

February 2 2011

Russia on Wednesday re-established contact with a [missing military satellite](#) but said it was unclear if the craft could work after it was sent into the wrong orbit.

The high-tech Geo-IK-2 craft was designed to help the military draw a three-dimensional map of the Earth and locate the precise positions of various targets.

But it lost contact with ground control shortly after its launch Tuesday from a northern Russian [space](#) centre, in the second such satellite mishap in less than two months.

A defence ministry spokesman said Wednesday that stable contact had been established with the craft and that officials were now trying to determine if its orbit would allow it to complete its assigned mission.

"We are currently maintaining steady contact" with the craft, Russian space forces commander Oleg Stapenko told Russian news agencies.

He added that the satellite's [elliptical orbit](#) was not as dramatically off course as originally suspected and that a joint task force composed of space and defence officials was studying whether the craft could be made operational.

It was not clear when the defence ministry would issue its final verdict on the craft.

The satellite's launch had already been delayed from December because of technical malfunctions.

Tuesday's mishap came less than five weeks after President Dmitry Medvedev fired two top space officials for a launch failure caused Russia to delay the deployment of its own navigation system.

Investigators said that accident was caused by a basic fuel miscalculation that made the craft too heavy to reach its required height.

The three Glonass satellites would have completed a system whose research had been started by the Soviet Union in 1976.

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