

# Rocket launches from California coast

April 15 2011

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A rocket carrying a national security payload has been successfully launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base on California's central coast.

The Atlas 5 [rocket](#) blasted off shortly before 9:30 p.m. Thursday. Vandenberg officials said the satellite was carrying a classified payload from the National Reconnaissance Office, which oversees the nation's constellation of spy satellites.

The rocket appeared as a brilliant light streaking across a clear Southern California night sky.

A live video feed of the launch showed exhaust pouring out of the engines and lingering in the atmosphere as the rocket climbed.

The launch, which was scheduled for Tuesday, had been delayed because of a problem with the rocket's avionics that has since been fixed.

After [liftoff](#), the rocket, flying with a single solid rocket booster, headed south on 1 million pounds of thrust - equal to the energy of about two dozen Hoover Dams.

The mission is classified and no other details are available about the satellite's purpose or cost.

United Launch Alliance, the joint venture of rocket builders [Lockheed Martin](#) Corp. and Boeing Co., said it's the fifth defense [payload](#) it has launched for the reconnaissance office in the past seven months.

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