

Russia launches US telecoms satellite into orbit

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Russian successfully launched a US Intelsat satellite into space late Wednesday, aboard a Zenit carrier rocket from the Baikonur space centre in Kazakhstan, a Russian space agency official said.

The launch provided more good news for the country's space industry which is resuming normal service after some recent high-profile failures.

"The launch of the Zenit 3SLB rocket carrying an Intelsat satellite took place at the cosmodrome in Baikonur", in the Kazakh steppes, at around 2100 GMT Wednesday, the Interfax news agency quoted the official as saying.

The satellite, produced by Orbital Services, will separate from the rocket at around 0330 GMT Thursday and take up its geostationary orbit, the source added.

The Intelsat-18 satellite is equipped with 32 transponders and will provide telecommunications services to customers in East Asia, US West Coast and the Pacific region.

It has an expected life-span of 15 years.

The successful launch came quick on the heels of the launch of a Soyuz-2 rocket and [navigation satellite](#) on Sunday, providing some welcome news for Russia's space industry after recent crashes, groundings and delays.

The Roskosmos space agency was forced to temporarily ground all Proton-M rockets using the Briz-M upper stage booster after losing an advanced [telecommunications satellite](#) on August 18.

Only six days later, a Progress cargo vessel flying to the International Space Station aboard a Soyuz carrier rocket crashed back to Earth less than six minutes after launch.

Some Soyuz missions have since also been grounded, forcing a delay of the next manned flight to the space station until November 14.

Soyuz is currently providing the only workhorses running to and from the [international space station](#), following the recent retirement of the American space shuttles.

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