

China 'has Australia space tracking station'

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China's Long March-2F/H rocket blasts off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in Gansu on Tuesday. China has acquired a space tracking station in Australia, its first such facility in a close US ally, a news report said on Saturday.

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The station in remote Dongara, about 350 kilometres (217 miles) north of Perth in western Australia, was used during Tuesday's launch of the [Shenzhou](#) VIII mission, Hong Kong daily the South Morning [China](#) Post

reported.

The United States and the [European Space Agency](#) have long had tracking facilities in Australia, including the joint US-Australian Pine Gap satellite station established decades ago near the central outback town of Alice Springs.

Reaction to the Chinese station, its first in a key US ally's territory, will be closely watched to see whether Washington will raise objections.

[Chinese officials](#) reportedly see Dongara as a major step forward for the rising power's ambitious [space](#) programme, which it holds as a symbol of its growing global stature.

Xie Jingwen, deputy chief designer of the tracking and command system for Beijing's manned space programme reportedly lauded the move, saying China had "added Australia to its global network of ground stations".

The Dongara station is its fifth outside China, with one each in Pakistan and Chile, another in Kenya and one in Namibia.

The facility was built by the Swedish Space Corporation (SSC) and has been leased to Beijing, with key components shipped from China, according to the newspaper.

A senior SSC official in China told the Post that the Chinese space authorities were renting the site, including buildings and equipment, after Australian authorities had inspected the facility and approved the deal.

The Australian defence ministry had no comment on Dongara.

SSC could not be immediately reached for comment but on its website the company said the location of the Dongara Satellite Station was "particularly advantageous for accessing low-inclination [orbiting satellites](#)".

"It is also frequently used for geostationary orbit raising operations, and very frequently is used for first acquisition of launch vehicle and spacecraft telemetry at orbit insertion/deployment," it said.

The Shenzhou VIII spacecraft successfully docked with the Tiangong-1 experimental module on Thursday, a crucial step for China towards its goal of setting up a manned space station by 2020.

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