

China puts European satellite into orbit

November 27 2012



A Long March rocket blasts off from the Jiuquan launch centre in Gansu province, 2011. China "successfully" launched a European-made telecommunications satellite into orbit aboard a Chinese rocket.

China on Tuesday "successfully" launched a European-made telecommunications satellite into orbit aboard a Chinese rocket, the official Xinhua news agency said.

The satellite, made by Thales Alenia Space, will provide telecommunications services for customers in Asia, Africa and Europe,

the report said, but did not name them.

The satellite had reached its [proper orbit](#) and was operating normally after being lifted aloft by a Long March-3B rocket which took off from a base in the southwestern province of Sichuan on Tuesday evening, Xinhua said.

Thales Alenia Space, a world leader in satellites, is a joint subsidiary of French defence electronics company Thales which holds 67 percent and Italian aerospace and defence giant Finmeccanica which has the remaining 33 percent.

China views satellite launches as part of its ambitious space programme. The country sent its first female astronaut, Liu Yang, into space earlier this year on the [Shenzhou-9](#) in China's first manual space docking mission.

Last month, a Chinese rocket successfully launched a Venezuelan earth-observation satellite into orbit, as the two countries forge closer economic ties.

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Citation: China puts European satellite into orbit (2012, November 27) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-11-china-european-satellite-orbit.html>

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