

SpaceX to launch Japanese satellite early Friday

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Space X's Falcon 9 rocket lifts off on April 8, 2016

SpaceX plans to launch early Friday a Japanese communications satellite into a distant orbit before attempting to land the first stage of its Falcon rocket on a floating platform in the Atlantic Ocean.

The liftoff is scheduled for 1:21 am (0521 GMT) from Cape Canaveral, Florida, the California-based company headed by Internet entrepreneur Elon Musk said.

The satellite, owned by Japanese satellite operator SKY Perfect JSAT,

aims to provide telecommunications services for East Asia.

After the launch, SpaceX will attempt to return the first stage of its Falcon 9 rocket to a drone ship named "Of Course I Still Love You."

But SpaceX said the high speed of the returning rocket makes a successful touchdown unlikely.

SpaceX succeeded at setting the down the Falcon 9's first stage, upright and intact on the drone ship, after launching an unmanned cargo ship to the International Space Station in April.

SpaceX wants to perfect this technique as part of its effort to re-use rocket parts instead of jettisoning the costly equipment into the ocean after each launch.

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