

# Japan aborts mini-rocket mission shortly after liftoff

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The world's smallest rocket SS-520 carrying a mini satellite for observation of the Earth's surface is launched from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Uchinoura Space Center in Kagoshima Prefecture, on January 15, 2017

Japan's space agency Sunday aborted a mission to use a mini-rocket to send a satellite into orbit after the spacecraft stopped sending data to ground control shortly after liftoff.

The SS-520 [rocket](#), which stands around the size of a power pole, lifted off at 8:33 am (2333 GMT) into a clear sky at the Uchinoura Space Centre in southern Kagoshima Prefecture.

The rocket, regarded as one of the smallest units in the world capable of sending satellites into the space, was carrying the three-kilogramme (6.6 pound) "TRICOM-1" observation satellite.

But officials aborted the mission within minutes of takeoff after the space agency stopped receiving [data](#) from the rocket after the launch.

Local media said data stopped arriving 20 seconds after liftoff.

"The first stage of the rocket's flight went as planned. However, we were unable to receive [data] from the unit as it continued the flight," the agency said in a statement.

The rocket later fell back to earth, landing within a designated safety area in waters off the coast of southeast Japan, according to officials.

The country's [space agency](#) is expected to provide a more detailed debrief about the nature of the mishap as more information becomes available.

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