

China delays launch to complete GPS-like Beidou network

June 16 2020



In this Nov. 6, 2018, file photo, a model of Chinese Beidou Navigation Satellite System is displayed during the 12th China International Aviation and Aerospace Exhibition, also known as Airshow China 2018, in Zhuhai city, south China's Guangdong province. Citing technical reasons, China has delayed the launch of the final satellite to complete its Beidou Navigation Satellite System constellation that emulates the U.S. Global Positioning System. The official Xinhua News Agency said Tuesday, June 16, 2020's mission aboard a Long March-3 rocket from the southwestern satellite launch base of Xicheng was scrubbed after pre-

launch checks discovered "product technical problems." (AP Photo/Kin Cheung, File)

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No details or a new launch date were immediately announced. China's [space program](#) has developed rapidly over the past two decades as the government devotes major resources toward developing independent high-tech capabilities—and even dominating in fields such as 5G data processing.

When completed, this third iteration of the Beidou system will provide global coverage for timing and navigation, offering an alternative to Russia's GLONASS and the European Galileo systems, as well as America's GPS.

The first version of Beidou, meaning "Big Dipper," was decommissioned in 2012. Future plans call for a smarter, more accessible and more integrated system with Beidou at its core, to come online by 2035.

In 2003, China became just the third country to independently launch a [manned space mission](#) and has since constructed an experimental [space](#) station and sent a pair of rovers to the surface of the moon. Future plans call for a fully functioning permanent space station and a possible

crewed flight to the moon, with its first attempt to send an orbiter and rover to Mars possibly coming as early as next month. If successful, it would be the only other country besides the U.S. to land on Earth's closest planetary neighbor.

The program has suffered some setbacks, including launch failures, and has had limited cooperation with other countries' space efforts, in part because of U.S. objections to its close connections to the Chinese military.

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