

Bad cabling blamed for failed launch of European satellites

November 17 2020

Arianespace said Tuesday that wrong cabling was likely to blame for the failed launch of a rocket that was meant to lift two European satellites into orbit.

The European Space Agency said the Vega carrier rocket deviated from its trajectory eight minutes after liftoff from Kourou, in French Guiana, late Monday.

France-based Arianespace said an initial investigation showed the first stages of the Vega launch vehicle had functioned as planned. When the final stage of the rocket—known as AVUM—ignited, the spacecraft tumbled off course, leading to a "loss of mission," it said.

"A problem related to the integration of the fourth-stage AVUM nozzle activation system is the most likely cause of the loss of control of the launcher," Arianespace said.

The company's [chief technical officer](#), Roland Lagier, said data indicated the issue was down to wrongly installed cables in a system controlling the thrusters.

He blamed [quality control](#) and "a series of human errors," for the problem.

"Arianespace expresses its deepest apologies to the clients and the satellite manufacturers involved in this mission," the company said.

The Vega rocket was carrying Spain's first Earth observation satellite, called SEOSAT-Ingenio, and TARANIS, a French satellite designed to observe events in the [upper atmosphere](#).

Vega is Arianespace's smallest launch vehicle and produced mainly by Italian aerospace company Avio.

A previous Vega launch failure, in July 2019, was attributed to a [design flaw](#).

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