

Europe's Vega rocket successfully launches

April 29 2021

Europe's Vega rocket took off overnight Wednesday from French Guiana with Earth observation satellites on board, six months after losing two satellites.

The rocket left Kourou in French Guiana at around 10:50 pm local time (0150 GMT), with the mission lasting just under two hours.

The launch comes half a year after the operation lost French and Spanish satellites when the rocket fell into the sea on November 17 after a technical malfunction.

The April 28 to 29 launch carried Pleiades Neo 3, the first high resolution satellite of a new Earth observation constellation operated by Airbus.

The rocket is also carrying some lighter payload, including a Norwegian observation microsatellite used to detect radar for maritime navigation.

The Pleiades Neo satellites will offer improved geolocation tools which will help during [natural disasters](#), according to launch provider Arianespace.

The launch is the third this year from the Kourou space centre and the 18th from a Vega.

The Vega rocket is a crucial component of Europe's ambitions to compete in the booming aerospace market, where it faces strong

competition from rivals including Elon Musk's SpaceX.

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