

US intelligence satellite launched from California

April 18 2022



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket carrying National Reconnaissance Office mission (NROL-85) launches from Space Launch Complex-4 East at Vandenberg Space Force Base, Calif., on Sunday morning, April 17, 2022. NROL-85 is the first NRO mission to reuse a SpaceX rocket booster, and is the second Falcon 9 launch procured through the National Security Space Launch (NSSL) contract to launch from the Western Range. The Falcon 9's first stage booster returned and landed successfully at the California base's Landing Zone 4. Credit: Michael Peterson/Space Launch Delta 30 Public Affairs/USNORTHCOM via AP

A classified satellite for the U.S. National Reconnaissance Office was launched into space from California on Sunday.

The NROL-85 satellite lifted off at 6:13 a.m. from Vandenberg Space Force Base aboard a two-stage SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket.

It was the [first mission](#) by the NRO to reuse a SpaceX rocket booster, Vandenberg said in a statement.

The Falcon's first stage flew back and landed at the seaside base northwest of Los Angeles.

The NRO only described the NROL-85 satellite as a "critical national security payload."

Its launch was one of three awarded by the Air Force to SpaceX in 2019 for a combined fixed price of \$297 million.

The NRO is the [government agency](#) in charge of developing, building, launching and maintaining U.S. satellites that provide intelligence data to senior policymakers, the intelligence community and the Defense Department.

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