

SpaceX soars into 2024 with a burst of color and six special satellites

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The first SpaceX launch of 2024, which took place Tuesday night, included something that none of the company's prior launches did.

The Falcon 9 rocket carried 21 low-orbit satellites for its sister company, Starlink, including six that—for the first time—feature direct-to-cell communications. The satellites are designed to eliminate cellphone service "dead zones" with expanding access to text, voice and data messages for all LTE cellular devices, according to the company.

The rocket launched at 7:44 p.m. Tuesday from Vandenberg Space Force Base in Lompoc, creating a nighttime show for spectators.

The satellites join thousands of other Starlink satellites in low Earth orbit. SpaceX hopes to have as many as 42,000 satellites in this network, as Space.com reports. The satellites can sometimes be glimpsed marching across the night sky.

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