

# Glomass Available to Russian Civilians January 2007

Russia's global satellite navigation system will become available to civilians in the country next year, the Russian Defense Minister announced. Mr. Sergei Ivanov said Russia's Global Navigation Satellite System, known as Glonass, will be offered to commercial customers worldwide in 2009. Glonass is the equivalent of the U.S. Global Positioning System, or GPS.

"Beginning January, the military General Staff will lift existing restrictions that had prevented civilians from using Glonass, allowing it "to work for the development of the economy and transport," Ivanov said in televised remarks. Russia now has 14 Glonass satellites. He said 18 satellites were necessary to provide navigation services over the entire Russian territory. "By the end of 2009, the system will be available worldwide for which we would need to have 24 satellites," he said, according to the ITAR-Tass news agency.

Developed during the 1970s, the system originally had 24 satellites, but their number had dwindled after the 1991 Soviet collapse. Thanks to Russia's booming oil revenues, the government has earmarked funds to revive the system to its full strength.

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