

Three New Glonass Satellites in Orbit

Russia has successfully orbited three Glonass navigation satellites at 10:42 p.m. Moscow time (7:42 p.m. GMT) on 25th December 2007. The three satellites were launched from the Baikonur space center in Kazakhstan to join the existing satellite constellation, which comprises 15 operational satellites.

The launch took place for the first time on board an improved Proton-M carrier rocket, Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported.

This was the second successful launch of a Proton rocket carrying Glonass navigation satellites this year. A previous launch of a Proton-M carrier rocket on 6th September 2007 failed.

"The equipment of each of the satellites has a seven-year active lifetime," a spokesman from the Applied Mechanics Scientific Production Association said.

Another six satellites will be added to the Glonass system in 2008, and the first two improved Glonass-K satellites are set to be launched in 2009. The future modification, Glonass-K, is an entirely new model based on a non-pressurised platform, standardised to the specifications of the previous models' platform, Express-1000.

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