

Russia to Expand Glonass by Year End

Russia will increase the number of satellites comprising its Glonass navigation system to 18 by the end of 2007, the head of Russia's Federal Space Agency (Roskosmos) said Monday. Glonass is a Russian version of the U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS), which is designed for both military and civilian use, and allows users to identify their positions in real time. The system can also be used in geological prospecting.

Two carrier rockets are planned to be launched by the end of 2007, to put in orbit six Glonass navigation satellites. As a result, the Glonass orbital group will comprise 18 satellites.

A total of 9.88 billion rubles (US\$379.7 million) has been appropriated for Glonass from the federal budget in 2007, and 4.72 billion (US\$181.4 million) in 2006. Perminov said a full orbital group of 24 satellites will be ready for global coverage by the end of 2009, but even with 18 satellites in orbit it will be able to start providing services for military and civilian users, covering Russian territory.

The head of Roskosmos also said that Glonass will be fully integrated with the U.S. GPS and European Galileo satellite navigation systems. The satellites currently in use are of two modifications - Glonass and its updated version Glonass-M. The latter has a longer service life of seven years and is equipped with updated antenna feeder systems and an additional navigation frequency for civilian users.

A 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.

Glonass-Ks' estimated service life has been increased to 10-12 years, and a third, "civilian" L-range frequency has been added. Tests on Glonass-K satellites are scheduled for 2007.

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