

US to launch spy satellites to track threats in orbit

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A new cluster of spy satellites is to be launched by the US Space Force this summer, according to a media report, cited by the Sputnik news agency.

The classified "space situational awareness" program, "Silent Barker" - sometimes referred to as "Silentbarker" - is described as a collaboration between the Air Force Space Command and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). A network of satellites specially conceived to complement both low-earth orbit satellites, and ground-based sensors, will be placed in geosynchronous orbit approximately 35,400 kilometers (22,000 miles) above Earth.

This capability enables indications and warnings of threats" targeting high-value US systems and will "provide capabilities to search, detect, and track objects from space for timely threat detection," the US Space Force was cited as saying in a statement.

The satellite cluster is to be launched on board an Atlas V booster some time after July, with the exact date to be announced 30 days in advance on social media, added the NRO. The expendable launch system Atlas V, originally designed by Lockheed Martin, is at present operated by United Launch Alliance, which is a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

The cluster "will dramatically increase Space Force's ability to track on-orbit adversary satellites that could be maneuvering around or be in proximity to our satellites," Sarah Mineiro, ex-lead staffer of the House Armed Services Committee strategic subcommittee overseeing space programs, told the report.

This comes as top American generals have repeatedly voiced concerns regarding the speed of development of the latest generation of military technologies in the main rival countries, such as China and Russia.