Zenit-3SL Rocket Launch Fails, Sending Satellite Into Ocean

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A launch of a Zenit-3SL in September 2011.

Russia's Zenit-3SL rocket launch in the Sea Launch program failed Friday, sending the rocket and an attached satellite into the Pacific Ocean.

The rocket was launched at 10:56 a.m. Moscow time from the Odyssey floating platform in the Pacific Ocean but fell into the water within minutes.

The rocket was meant to put an Intelsat-27 European communications satellite into orbit to serve Luxembourg-based Intelsat's customers in North America, South America, the North Atlantic and Europe.

The reasons for the malfunction have not yet been determined. A commission will determine the cause of the failure, space official Vitaly Lopota told journalists, Interfax reported.

The Zenit rocket should have been in operation for a total of 8 minutes and 30 seconds, after

which the satellite itself and the orbital section of the rocket carrier should have detached.

Lopota, the president and director of the Energia rocket corporation in charge of the launch, said the malfunction occurred almost immediately. "The motors in the first stage worked for 60 seconds, then malfunctioned," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who is responsible for the space industry in the Cabinet, wrote on Twitter that the failure occurred after only 20 seconds.

Russia's space program has suffered several botched rocket launches in recent years — at least 10 between the end of 2010 and August 2012.

The most prominent failure occurred in January 2012, when the $161 million Fobos–Grunt space probe, meant to travel to a moon of Mars, malfunctioned shortly after liftoff and later crashed into the Pacific Ocean.

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