

Russian-Ukrainian Rocket Launches European Satellite from Pacific Ocean

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A Russian-Ukrainian built Zenit rocket lifting off from a floating launch pad in the ocean owned by Sea Launch.

A Russian-Ukrainian built rocket successfully launched a European-made communications satellite from a floating launch pad in the Pacific Ocean on Tuesday, in spite of the political hurdles thrown up by the conflict in Ukraine.

Sea Launch, majority-owned by Russia's Energia Rocket and Space Corporation and based in Long Beach, California, launched Eutelsat 3B — a European satellite commissioned for Airbus Defense and Space — aboard its Zenit-3SL rocket, Sea Launch said in a press release.

The company has now racked up 31 successful launches from its floating launch pad, the Odyssey, but Tuesday's was the first since Sea Launch was forced to temporarily suspend its operations after suffering a launch failure in 2013.

Technical challenges are not the only obstacle that Sea Launch has overcome. Its Zenit rocket is built by the Yuzhnoye Design Bureau in eastern Ukraine — which sources 70 percent of its components in Russia. As tensions in eastern Ukraine flared following Russia's annexation of Crimea in March, the company's supply chain and Russian-Ukrainian workforce have continued to operate "nominally" — which in spaceflight parlance means normally.

In fact, Interfax-Ukraine reported last week that the Ukrainian space industry had experienced a surge in production in the first quarter of 2014, right as the crisis in Ukraine was reaching a fever pitch.

On top of potential supply disruptions in Ukraine, Sea Launch — as well as other launch providers — was faced with potential export license restrictions in late March when the U.S. State Department, responding to Moscow's actions in Ukraine, said it would suspend and later revoke export licenses required to authorize the launch of Western satellites aboard Russian rockets. The threat remains hanging — no licenses have so far been affected, and the globalized commercial space industry presses on.

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