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South Korea's second homegrown military surveillance satellite, aboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket, lifts off from Kennedy Space Center in Florida, Sunday, in this photo provided by the Ministry of National Defense. Yonhap

## S. Korea launches 2nd spy satellite into orbit

South Korea successfully launched its second indigenous spy satellite on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Kennedy Space Center in the U.S. state of Florida on Monday (Seoul time), according to the defense ministry.

The Falcon 9 lifted off at 8:17 a.m. (7:17 p.m. local time) from the Kennedy Space Center and sent the reconnaissance satellite into orbit approximately 45 minutes after launch, the ministry said.

It succeeded in communicating with an overseas ground station at 10:57 a.m., it noted.

It is the second military satellite launched under South Korea's plan to acquire five spy satellites by 2025 to better monitor North Korea.

The satellite was equipped with synthetic aperture radar (SAR) sensors that capture data using microwaves and are capable of collecting data regardless of weather conditions. The other three satellites will also be equipped with SAR sensors.

Electro-optical and infrared sensors capable of capturing detailed images of the Earth's surface were fitted on the first satellite launched in December.

When operated together, the five satellites are expected to provide regular coverage at about two-hour intervals, according to analysts.

"Our military's independent surveillance and reconnaissance capability has been strengthened through the first launch of the SAR satellite. We will continue to prepare for upcoming satellite launches," the ministry said.

The launch comes as Pyongyang is also making its own efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance capabilities, which could potentially enhance its precision strike capability against major targets in South Korea and the United States.

North Korea placed its first military spy satellite into orbit last November and has vowed to launch three more spy satellites this year. (Yonhap)