Arianespace launch failure destroys military satellite



A European mission to launch a satellite aboard Arianespace's Vega rocket has come to a premature end after a "major anomaly" occurred just two minutes after liftoff. The anomaly occurred during the Vega rocket's second stage ignition, at which point mission control lost its telemetry link from the launcher. The uncrewed mission was intending to take a United Arab Emirates Falcon Eye 1 military satellite into orbit from Guiana Space Center in South America. Arianespace is a French-headquartered launch provider that's overseen by the European Space Agency.

It's currently unclear what the cause of the problem was. Speaking during the mission's livestream, Arianespace's executive vice president of missions, operations and purchasing, Luce Fabreguettes, simply said that a "major anomaly" had occurred. A statement on Arianspace's website said that "Data analyses are in progress to clarify the reasons for this failure" and that an "independent inquiry commission" would be set up in the coming hours.

The launch’s live broadcast doesn’t offer many clues as to what went wrong. Around 26 minutes into the livestream you can see the rocket’s first stage ignition come to an end, and soon afterwards the flight’s telemetry data appears to show its course diverging from the intended route. The rocket later crashed into the Atlantic Ocean, destroying the satellite it was carrying.

[embedded content]

The Vega launcher is Arianespace’s newest rocket according to *SpaceNews*, and had previously conducted 14 successful missions since its first launch in February 2012. The rocket is designed to launch payloads up to 1,500 kg in weight into low Earth orbit. The Falcon Eye 1 satellite it was carrying was built by Airbus Defence and Space, and would have served the UAE Armed Forces as well as providing commercial imagery services.

Thankfully, the Arianespace rocket was on an uncrewed mission, unlike the Russian Soyuz mission that failed last year, forcing its two crewmembers to make an emergency landing. The cause of the failure was later revealed to be a bend in one of the rocket’s sensor’s, which started a chain of events that lead to the rocket veering violently off course. After the issue was corrected, the Soyuz rocket successfully launched in the same configuration in a subsequent uncrewed and then crewed missions.

https://www.theverge.com/2019/7/11/20690023/arianespace-satellite-launch-failure-uae-falconeye1-uncrewed-mission