



ISRAEL LAUNCHES NEW COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITE

Israel on Monday morning successfully launched Amos III, an advanced communications satellite, four days after a previous attempt failed.

The satellite was launched from Kazakhstan and will reach its permanent position in the sky, 36,000 kilometers (22,000 miles) above earth, in the afternoon.

Amos III will provide Israel with high-quality communication and broadcasting services for the next 18 years, and its objective is mainly commercial, not espionage.

The Israeli security system can use the satellite for protected communication channels.

The satellite was developed in Israel at the cost of around \$170 million,

Yiftah Shapir, a researcher with the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University, said Amos III was not equipped for reconnaissance purposes.

"Amos does not take pictures," he told The Media Line. "It's at a height of 36,000 kilometers, which is too far away to take photos and its orbit is also not suitable for that purpose. It hangs at a constant position above the equator."

However, despite it being a commercial satellite, Israel's Arab neighbors have reason to take note of this development.

"The technology on Amos is primarily Israeli, and that's where we're different from other countries in the region," Shapir said.

Almost all Arab countries have communication satellites today, but they are all purchased from foreign countries, whereas Amos is constructed in Israel.

"They have something to be concerned about, that Israel has this technology to create a satellite, whereas the Iranians have been trying for 30 years and have not been successful," Shapir said.

Theoretically, in the case of an emergency, Amos III can be used for military communication purposes, if other channels of communication are not sufficient.

Israel already operates several commercial and spy satellites.

By Rachelle Kliger on Monday, April 28, 2008