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One Down Two to Go, Iran Officials Say

Iran is determined to get its own satellite into space

Exactly a week ago, the state-run Iranian television published a brief news report which stated that Iran had officially opened its first space center and launched its first rocket into space. Not much has been said about the rocket, except that it carried a payload consisting of some scientific instruments to measure the high altitude atmosphere and that its name is Kovashgar-1, which in English means Explorer-1. Although information regarding the altitude the rocket reached has not been published by the Iranian government, they argue it reached a height of about 100 kilometers, information unconfirmed by third party space monitoring stations around the world. A similar rocket is thought to have been launched by the state of Iran on the 25th of February, 2007, however this fact is also unclear. According to the president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, his country is going through a rocket development stage that should ultimately give it capability to launch its own satellites into space, without external help. "Two other multi-staged rockets will be launched so that we can then send a satellite into space," said Ahmadinejad. Iran has scheduled the launch of a self-made satellite by the end of the summer; however, the U.S. government and the international community seem to think otherwise, given the past diplomatic conflicts between the two sides and the fact that there is still not much known about their possible nuclear program, which according to some U.S. secret services has stopped more than three years ago. Ahmadinejad said that the test that took place last week was a complete success for Iran's space program; the Kavoshgar-1 rocket was composed of three stages, with the first one detaching after a 90-second burn to be safely returned to Earth with the help of a parachute, and the second after a 300-second burn which had a similar fate. "The probe is sending information of wind, temperature, pressure to allow the sending of new probes into space", said Ahmadinejad in the speech commemorating 29 years of the Islamic revolution. The Iranian state already has a satellite into Earth orbit called Sina-1, launched in 2005 with a Russian-made rocket. Omid, or hope, is thought to become Iran's first home-produced satellite, launched with a self-made space rocket, scheduled to launch this summer. The Arab country still denies that it has a nuclear program, which puts it right in the middle of an international isolation. White House spokeswoman Dana Perino states that the space center opened by the Iranian state, last week, is located in a remote area in the Semnan province, which will also be the most likely location from which the next rockets will be launched.