



**National Reconnaissance Office
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NRO, in partnership with the U.S. Navy and New Zealand Defence Force, Successfully Launches Research & Development Demonstrator

CHANTILLY, Va. — The National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), in partnership with the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) New Zealand Defence Force's (NZDF) Defence Science & Technology (DST), and SEOPS Space, successfully launched Otter, a research & development (R&D) demonstrator, aboard the Transporter-12 mission on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from Space Launch Complex-4E Vandenberg Space Force Base in California on Jan. 14, 2025, at 2:09 p.m. EST.

The aim of Otter's collaborative R&D mission is to enable new technological developments to operate in an increasingly complex space environment.

Otter is a 6U CubeSat built and operated by NPS on behalf of the NRO, and hosts a NZDF payload built by DST. The primary payload, Tui, is a NZDF payload built by DST in Auckland, New Zealand. Tui will characterize and validate space-based communication network performance. Two secondary payloads built by NPS will help develop and evaluate communication technologies and concepts of operations on future CubeSat missions.

"The NRO is always looking for innovative ways to advance our capabilities in space," said Dr. Aaron Weiner, director of the NRO's Advanced Systems & Technology Directorate. "This demonstrator showcases the value in rapidly space-qualifying low-cost, commercial off-the-shelf hardware."

For more than 60 years, the NRO has successfully met the needs of its U.S. intelligence, military, civil, and allied partners. It remains the world's leader in unique intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance systems. The NRO's next-generation systems will help ensure that the right data is delivered to the right user at the right time, faster than ever before.

Additional information on upcoming NRO launches will be available at [NRO.gov/launch](https://nro.gov/launch).

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Ever since its inception at the dawn of the space age more than 60 years ago, the NRO has brought the farthest reaches of the planet into our grasp — to see it, hear it, and sense it. Today, the NRO is building on that legacy of innovation, harnessing the limitless potential of space to make our nation even safer and stronger. Learn more at [NRO.gov](https://nro.gov).