**Keyhole Spacecraft KH-13**

The **KH-13** is a potential successor to the [KH-12](http://www.answers.com/topic/kh-12) [reconnaissance satellite](http://www.answers.com/topic/spy-satellite). Only extremely limited information is available. It may or may not be the same project as **8X**, later rechristened as **EIS** (**Enhanced Imaging System**). It is believed that a satellite launched as part of one of these programs was put into orbit in [1999](http://www.answers.com/topic/1999) and others may have been launched afterward. What is described by some as the KH-13 may just be a variant of the KH-12. It is even possible that a distinct KH-12 does not exist, and the KH-13 is merely a late-model [KH-11](http://www.answers.com/topic/kh-11), a platform in use since [1976](http://www.answers.com/topic/1976).

Many people believe that the KH-13 is an enhanced version of the KH-12 that incorporates [stealth technology](http://www.answers.com/topic/stealth-technology). If it exists, it probably has a shape similar to that of the [Hubble Space Telescope](http://www.answers.com/topic/hubble-space-telescope)—a shape its predecessors are believed to have as well. Another possibility is that the satellite extends the observable range of the [electromagnetic spectrum](http://www.answers.com/topic/electromagnetic-spectrum) into frequencies used by [radar](http://www.answers.com/topic/radar), possibly including capabilities of the rumored [Lacrosse](http://www.answers.com/topic/lacrosse-satellite) satellite. This builds upon the optical and [infrared](http://www.answers.com/topic/infrared-1) capabilities of predecessors.

Some believe that the 8X/EIS project is different from the KH-13. One considerable difference cited is the possibility of a very large fuel tank for making significant course corrections in [orbit](http://www.answers.com/topic/orbit). Some have suggested that the highly eccentric [Molniya orbit](http://www.answers.com/topic/molniya-orbit) would be used, giving the satellite a long "dwell time" to observe areas. However, the greater distance from the [Earth](http://www.answers.com/topic/earth)'s surface that this requires would necessitate an improvement in optical systems. The 8X is said to be refuellable by the [Space Shuttle](http://www.answers.com/topic/space-shuttle-program), but it would be extremely difficult for the shuttle to match a Molniya orbit.

The 8X program was mentioned in the press at least as far back as [1995](http://www.answers.com/topic/1995). Cost overruns were a consideration even then.

Some of the information contained in this article may have originated in the rules for "Global Thunder", an online [wargame](http://www.answers.com/topic/wargaming) (the Center for Defense Information link below lists Battlefront.com as one of several references). Some wargames include fictional devices or add abilities to existing devices that they don't really have.

The KH-13 is also the subject of [Bruce Sterling](http://www.answers.com/topic/bruce-sterling)'s [science fiction](http://www.answers.com/topic/science-fiction) book *The Zenith Angle*, released in [April 2004](http://www.answers.com/topic/april-2004). It is unknown if any of the abilities described in the book are equal to or beyond what the real KH-13/8X/EIS devices are capable of (if they exist at all).