**Global Spy Satellites**

A spy satellite (officially referred to as a reconnaissance satellite) is an Earth observation satellite or communications satellite deployed for military or intelligence applications.

These are essentially space telescopes that are pointed toward the Earth instead of toward the stars. The first generation type (i.e. Corona and Zenit) took photographs, then ejected canisters of photographic film, which would descend to earth.

Corona capsules were retrieved in mid-air as they floated down on parachutes. Later spacecraft had digital imaging systems and downloaded the images via encrypted radio links.

In the United States, most information available is on programs that existed up to 1972. Some information about programs prior to that time are still classified, and a small trickle of information is available on subsequent missions.

A few up-to-date reconnaissance satellite images have been declassified on occasion, or leaked, as in the case of KH-11 photographs which were sent to *Jane's Defence Weekly* in 1985.

Examples of reconnaissance satellite missions:

* High resolution photography (IMINT)
* Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT)
* Communications eavesdropping (SIGINT)
* Covert communications
* Monitoring of nuclear test ban compliance (see National Technical Means)
* Detection of missile launches

**Russian reconnaissance satellites**

[**IMINT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagery_intelligence)

Photographic: [Yantar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yantar_%28satellite%29)**·** [Zenit](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zenit_%28satellite%29)**·** [Orlets](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Orlets_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Almaz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Almaz)

Electro-optical: [Araks](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Araks_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Arkon](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Arkon_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Enisei](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Enisei_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Kobalt](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kobalt_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Persona](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persona_%28satellite%29)

[**SIGINT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signals_intelligence)

ELINT: [Tselina-2](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tselina-2_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Liana](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Liana_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)

[**MASINT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measurement_and_Signature_Intelligence)

Secondary Mission: [Oko](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oko_%28satellite%29)**·** [Prognoz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SPRN-2_Prognoz)**·** [EKS](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=EKS_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)

**R&D**

Cartography: [Bars](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bars_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)

Navigation: [Parus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parus_%28satellite%29)

Meteorology: [Meteor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meteor_%28satellite%29)

**Anti-satellite**

Co-orbital: [IS-A](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=IS-A&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Almaz](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Almaz)**·** [Polyus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polyus_%28spacecraft%29)**·** [Soyuz PPK](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Soyuz_PPK&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [IS](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Istrebitel_Sputnikov_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Naryad](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Naryad_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)

ASAT Targets: [Lira](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lira_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [DS-P1-M](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=DS-P1-M_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)

**Communications**

Communications: [Molniya](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molniya_%28satellite%29)**·** [Luch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luch_%28satellite%29)**·** [Strela](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strela_%28satellite%29)**·** [Raduga-1](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Raduga-1_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Parus](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parus_%28satellite%29)**·** [Kondor](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Kondor_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Meridian](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meridian_%28satellite%29)

Data Relay: [Garpun](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Garpun_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)**·** [Luch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luch_%28satellite%29)**·** [Gelios](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luch_%28satellite%29)**·** [Potok](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Potok_(satellite)&action=edit&redlink=1)

**U.S. reconnaissance satellites**

[**IMINT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Imagery_Intelligence)

Photographic: KH-1 CORONA**·** KH-2 CORONA**·** KH-3 CORONA**·** KH-4A CORONA**·** KH-4B CORONA**·** KH-5 ARGON**·** KH-6 LANYARD**·** KH-7 GAMBIT**·** KH-8 GAMBIT**·** KH-9 HEXAGON**·** KH-10 DORIAN

Electro-optical: SAMOS**·** KH-11 KENNAN**·** KH-12**·** KH-13**·** FIA

Synthetic aperture radar:

LACROSSE

Infrared:

[**SIGINT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signals_intelligence)

Low Earth orbit: GRAB**·** Poppy**·** White Cloud**·** SAMOS F

Highly elliptical orbit:

[Jumpseat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jumpseat_%28satellite%29)**·** Trumpet

Geosynchronous Earth orbit:

Canyon**·** Magnum**·** Mentor**·** Mercury**·** [Rhyolite/Aquacade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhyolite/Aquacade)**·** Vortex

[**MASINT**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Measurement_and_Signature_Intelligence)