

Bill Gates-backed EarthNow will provide real-ti...

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ENTREPRENEURS

# Bill Gates-backed start-up EarthNow will provide real-time video of 'almost' anywhere on the planet

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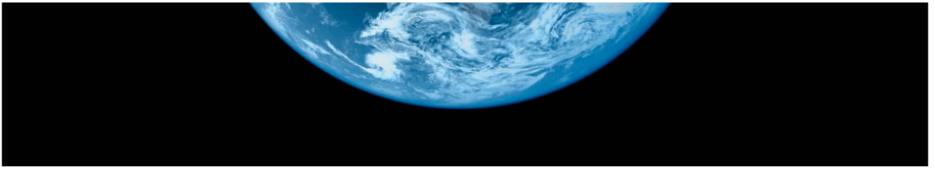


Photo by Caspar Benson

[Microsoft](#) billionaire [Bill Gates](#) is among the first investors in a new start-up aiming to build, launch and operate a collection of satellites that will deliver real-time video of the entire planet.

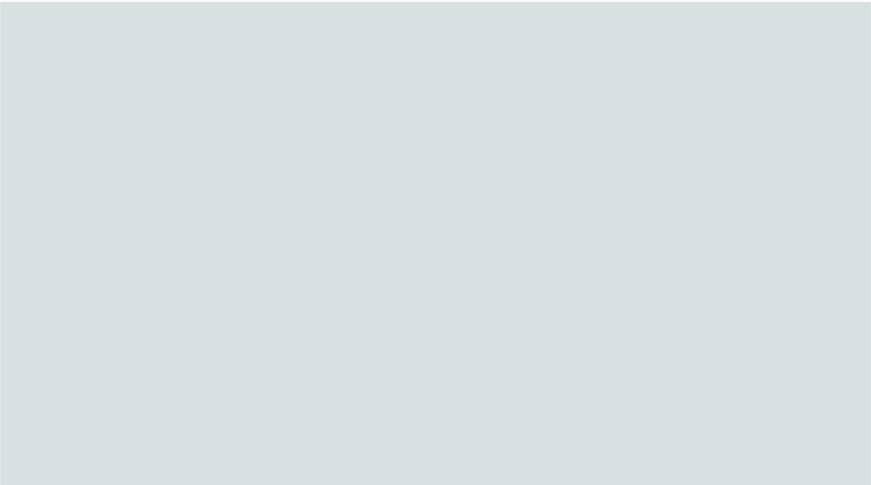
In April, Bellevue, Washington-based EarthNow announced its first round of funding raised from French aeronautical company [Airbus](#), Japanese multinational conglomerate SoftBank Group and OneWeb founder Greg Wyler, in addition to Gates. The amount of the raise was not disclosed.

The start-up, founded in 2017, will deploy a "constellation" of advanced imaging

satellites, which will provide real-time, continuous video of "almost" anywhere on Earth, according to an [April written statement announcing the fundraiser](#).

Eventually, EarthNow will even provide instant access to the footage of the Earth from a smartphone or tablet.

"We are excited by the prospect of giving everyone a stunningly-beautiful real-time window on your world from space. With EarthNow, we will all become virtual astronauts," says founder and CEO Russell Hannigan in a statement.



**EarthNow founder and CEO, Russell**

**Hannigan** Photo courtesy EarthNow

While current satellites are able to share visuals of Earth, they take “many minutes, hours and even days” to deliver images, according to the EarthNow website.

“With EarthNow’s constellation of satellites, you will see events unfold as they happen,” says Hannigan. Images will be available to users in as little as one second, says the website.

Combined with image enhancement techniques, the full color footage will be clear enough to track events from one horizon to another and users will be able to zoom in on a particular location for closer detail, the EarthNow website says.

At night, users will be able to see the

lights from buildings in towns and cities, traffic on roads, lights from ships at sea, forest fires and lightening.

However, to protect individual privacy, the resolution will not allow a user to see any one specific person.

The footage will first be available to governments and business customers. Use cases of the EarthNow real-time data include catching illegal fishermen, monitoring hurricanes and typhoons as they develop, knowing when volcanoes erupt, tracking whale migration patterns, measuring the health of crops, observing conflict zones for quicker response times, according to the website.

The satellites will also have "machine intelligence," meaning they can "interpret" what they are seeing to aid in surveillance, the website says.

They are the first “lowcost, high-performance satellites [created] for mass-production,” according to a statement from OneWeb founder and executive chairman, Greg Wyler, and will “help humanity understand and manage its impact on Earth.”

Each one weighs approximately 500 pounds and the system is estimated to cost more than \$1 billion, [Hannigan told the Wall Street Journal](#).

The satellites will be deployed in stages, with the goal being “100% pole-to-pole global coverage,” [the website says](#). No time frame was provided.

EarthNow plans to create a more mass-market product that will provide instant access to real-time footage of the Earth to smart-device users.

Access to that kind of data naturally

brings up privacy concerns. EarthNow says it will operate within the law.

Announcing our latest spinout!

EarthNow delivers real-time video of almost anywhere in the world via a large constellation of satellites.

"Privacy is fundamental to EarthNow," the start-up says on its website. "We will hire a 'Chief Privacy Officer' to ensure that we not only meet the privacy laws in jurisdictions where we operate, but also that we respect societal privacy. We will work closely with governments and the public at large to address privacy concerns, while providing visual Earth coverage for the benefit of humanity and our planet."

The satellites, developed by OneWeb, will be mass produced by Airbus in Toulouse, France and Florida, according to the written statement.

EarthNow is a spin-off of [Intellectual Ventures](#), a business that helps inventors find a market for their inventions.

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