
SKYNET 6A satellite passes Critical Design Review

Airbus designed state-of-the-art secure military communications satellite on track

Manufacture ongoing with more than 400 working on the programme

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Stevenage, 13 July 2022 - Airbus has achieved a key milestone with the successful completion of the Critical Design Review (CDR) of the UK Ministry of Defence's (MOD) next secure military communications satellite, SKYNET 6A.

Richard Franklin, Managing Director of Airbus Defence and Space UK said: "Achieving this crucial milestone is tangible proof that in partnership with Defence Digital in the Ministry of Defence we are firmly on track and making great progress on this flagship programme. We now have more than 400 people working on the project at our key sites in Stevenage, Portsmouth and Hawthorn. We are building SKYNET 6A with its unique military communications payload entirely in the UK and we currently have more than 45 small to medium sized enterprises and subcontractors helping to make sure we remain on target for launch in 2025."

Airbus was awarded the SKYNET 6A contract in July 2020 to supplement the existing SKYNET 5 fleet of four satellites and enhance the UK's milsatcom capability. The SKYNET 6A CDR has been achieved on time, working closely with the Defence Digital team. The next major milestone will be the delivery of the Communications Structure by the end of 2022.

The SKYNET 6A contract covers the design, development, manufacture, assembly, integration, test and launch, of the military communications satellite, and includes key national technology development programmes.

The SKYNET 5 programme, provided by Airbus as a full service outsource contract, has provided the UK MOD with a suite of highly robust, reliable and secure military communications services, supporting global operations since 2003. Airbus has been involved in SKYNET since 1974 and remains firmly committed to supporting a strong space manufacturing capability in the UK.

The SKYNET 6A satellite is based on the Airbus Eurostar Neo telecommunications satellite platform. It utilizes the unique Airbus military communications payload, adopting the latest digital processing to provide more capacity and greater versatility than previous SKYNET satellites. SKYNET 6A will feature proven Airbus electric orbit raising propulsion as well as electric station keeping systems for maximum cost effectiveness. Complete satellite integration will take place at Airbus facilities in the UK followed by testing using RAL Space testing facilities at Harwell in Oxfordshire supporting the UK Space Agency initiative for UK national end-to-end satellite production and support.

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Airbus designed and built SKYNET 6A is on track for launch in 2025 – Copyright Airbus

Note to Editors:

SKYNET 6A is still on track for launch in 2025 on a Falcon 9 provided by SpaceX.

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