

Airbus awarded German Armed Forces prime contract for military communications satellite system

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Munich, 04 July 2024 – Germany’s armed forces, the Bundeswehr, has awarded Airbus the SATCOMBw 3 prime contract for the next generation secure military satellite system which includes geostationary satellites as well as ground segment, launch and operation for 15 years. The spacecraft are due to be deployed before the end of the decade and the contract value amounts to €2.1 billion.

Michael Schoellhorn, CEO of Airbus Defence and Space, said: “After the success of the SATCOMBw Stage 2 programme, which we have been delivering since 2009, this latest contract reinforces our strategic partnership with the Bundeswehr, providing them with a greatly enhanced secure miltatcom capability that is future proofed into the 2040s. At a time when Western democracies are challenged and where the European institutional space ecosystem is struggling, we are excited and grateful to develop and build this leading-edge system. Long term partnerships are crucial to guaranteeing essential sovereignty and capability, and protecting our armed forces in the increasingly unstable geo-political environment.”

The contract covers the design, integration, test and in orbit delivery of two new Airbus built military GEO telecommunications satellites which are the successor communications satellites to COMSATBw 1B and 2B. It also includes upgrading of the existing ground segment to operate the new satellites as well as operational services for 15 years, with the possibility of extension.

The new generation Airbus satellites are based on the Eurostar Neo platform and will weigh around 6 metric tons. They will have extensive capabilities to keep pace with the rapid changes in digitalisation and the constantly increasing volume of data transfer required. They will also feature the latest state of the art technologies.

A key element of the overall contract is an in-depth German value chain involving partners such as Bremen-based OHB and numerous smaller German companies. Central elements including the guidance and integration of the advanced payloads, the solar arrays and overall operation of the spacecraft will be from Germany.

The Bundeswehr's satellite communications system (SATCOMBw) is indispensable for autonomous and independently deployable communications and information services. It ensures the global command and information capability of the German armed forces, such as operational contingents and special forces. The SATCOMBw 3 project also aims to ensure that NATO's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation commitments in this area will continue to be met in the future. With SATCOMBw 3, the Bundeswehr is responding to increased user requirements.

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