

Airbus to build the communication network for the French air and naval force, stage 3

Paris, 25 February 2025 – The French Defence Procurement Agency (DGA) has awarded the contract for the IP Network of the Naval Force (RIFAN) stage 3 to an industrial consortium led by Airbus Defence and Space and also comprising Naval Group. With a maximum value of 480 million euros and a maximum duration of 10 years, the contract covers the development of RIFAN upgrades, their deployment and operational maintenance.

“Airbus Defence and Space has been involved in the development and deployment of the network and communication systems of French Navy ships for almost 15 years. With RIFAN 3, we are preparing for the next stage, that of collaborative naval combat, i.e. networked combat of all assets and platforms involved in naval operations,” said Eric Even, Head of Space Digital at Airbus Defence and Space.

The developments will be carried out incrementally between 2026 and 2030 and deployed on ships between 2028 and 2032. More than 80 vessels will be equipped with the RIFAN 3 network: aircraft carriers, amphibious helicopter carriers, frigates, command and supply vessels, patrol vessels, minesweepers, submarines and support vessels.

This new RIFAN 3 contract aims in particular to increase inter-ship connectivity to progressively meet the needs of collaborative combat, thanks to new high-speed, low-latency transmission means that will be deployed on front-line vessels.

The resilience of the network will also be strengthened by the development of rapid reconfiguration mechanisms to adapt to the available means of communication in different tactical and operational scenarios. In the face of growing cyber threats, the network will also rely on enhanced cybersecurity to preserve the integrity and continuity of operations.

The RIFAN 2 system was commissioned in the French Navy by Airbus Defence and Space and its partners between 2012 and 2016. It brings together and operates all the communication resources available on board, such as Syracuse IV, Comcept, commercial satellite constellations (LEO, MEO and GEO) and radio resources. It allows the vessels to communicate on an IP network guaranteeing a very high level of security, and to exchange data with classification levels ranging from ‘unprotected’ to ‘secret’.

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