

Press Release

Airbus innovative payload to launch on Faraday-1 satellite

Airbus developed next generation retaskable software defined radio payload to be proven in space

Airbus' newspace initiative Prometheus will see rapid in-orbit proving of disruptive technology

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Stevenage, 01 July 2020 - An Airbus developed next generation retaskable software defined radio payload, Prometheus 1, will be launched on the Faraday-1 cubesat from New Zealand on 3 July. The Faraday-1 mission is part of In Space Missions Ltd's in-orbit demonstration programme.

Prometheus 1 is a software defined radio, connected to a 400 MHz UHF antenna that can be reprogrammed in orbit. It will be able to survey radio spectrum usage across the world from orbit, detect radar tracking of the Faraday-1 satellite, and identify and locate search and rescue beacons. Airbus is working with the UK's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) to foster greater partnerships between SMEs, government and Airbus on space.

Airbus Defence and Space in the UK created the self funded Prometheus programme to enable the rapid development of agile and innovative payloads using disruptive technology to offer significant capability to customers. Building on Airbus' proven track record of working with SMEs to create novel capability and prove concepts, the Prometheus programme developed the payload for Faraday-1 in under three months.

Richard Franklin, Managing Director of Airbus Defence and Space UK said: "By working with SMEs we are able to take advantage of their specialist capabilities and agility to develop new technologies and services for customers. Once Prometheus 1 is proven in orbit we will use it to de-risk future services and in life support solutions, working hand in hand with our SME partners. Future UK Government defence needs can be best served by the partnership approach we have pioneered at Airbus on Skynet 5, actively engaging with SMEs and developing new technologies and service solutions to prove concepts before delivering them to customers."

Prometheus 1 will prove passive radio frequency sensing in orbit, enabling the technology to be incorporated on future missions where hostile tracking of sovereign spacecraft is likely or possible.

The Airbus newspace team is championing the Prometheus programme and a second mission is already in development, which will be cubesats with RF and optical sensors, and features inter satellite links. Prometheus 2 is due for launch in the second half of 2021.

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Airbus is working with In Space Missions to offer 'Space as a Service' access to capability for DSTL to get involved in experiments with assets in orbit.

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About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2019 it generated revenues of € 70 billion and employed a workforce of around 135,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners. Airbus is also a European leader providing tanker, combat, transport and mission aircraft, as well as one of the world's leading space companies. In helicopters, Airbus provides the most efficient civil and military rotorcraft solutions worldwide.

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