

Press Release

SPACE SYSTEMS

Airbus-built French military Earth observation satellite (CSO) launched successfully

First of three next generation very high resolution optical observation satellites
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Kourou, 18 December 2018 – The first of the CSO (Composante spatiale optique) Earth observation satellites for the French Armed Forces, has been successfully launched on a Soyuz launcher from the Kourou European Spaceport in French Guyana.

CSO will provide very high resolution geo information intelligence to the French Armed Forces to its partners Germany, Belgium and Sweden. The CSO satellites are equipped with a very agile pointing system and are controlled via a secure ground control operations centre.

As prime contractor for the CSO satellites programme, Airbus has provided the agile platform and avionics, and was also responsible for the integration work, testing and delivery of the satellites to CNES. Thales Alenia Space provided Airbus with the very-high resolution optical instrument. Airbus teams will also continue leading the User Ground Segment operations, as they do currently with operating legacy programmes (Helios, Pleiades, SarLupe, Cosmo-Skymed).

Airbus was awarded the CSO contract at the end of 2010, by CNES, the French space agency acting on behalf of DGA, the French Defence Procurement Agency. The contract included an option for a third satellite, which was activated after Germany joined the programme in 2015.

“Thanks to our enduring expertise and close partnership with the French MoD since the beginning of the French Space adventure, as well as the tremendous support across industry and partners, especially Thales Alenia Space, we did it! Today, we are able and extremely proud to provide the most modern and efficient observation capability for the safety of our citizens and the sovereignty and independence of France and Europe. CSO is indeed a big step up in terms of resolution, complexity, safety of transmission, reliability and availability: only a couple of other nations can claim such a capability,” said Nicolas Chamussy, Head of Airbus Space Systems.

“For decades, Airbus, as well as other industrial partners, has been developing new technologies, instruments, platforms, secured networks, to successfully provide Helios 1, Pleiades, and Helios 2 systems for the benefit of French and European sovereignty. Today CSO is also the achievement of the best of Europe working together!”

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The satellite's tremendous agility and stability enable it to quickly provide users with extremely high-quality images from the Thales Alenia Space instrument, even for the most complex acquisition schedules.

Airbus has made use of the latest generation of gyroscopic actuators, fibre optic gyroscopes, on-board electronics and control software to optimise weight and inertia and significantly increase the pointing speed.

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About Airbus

Airbus is a global leader in aeronautics, space and related services. In 2017 it generated revenues of € 59 billion restated for IFRS 15 and employed a workforce of around 129,000. Airbus offers the most comprehensive range of passenger airliners from 100 to more than 600 seats. 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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