

Lockheed Martin-Led Team Completes On-Orbit Checkout Of Final Milstar II Satellite Ahead Of Schedule

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A U.S. Air Force/Lockheed Martin-led team has successfully accomplished an accelerated on-orbit checkout of the last Milstar II secure communications satellite and transferred full operational control of the spacecraft to the Air Force Space Command. The satellite will now be quickly placed into service to support current military operations. The Milstar II satellite communications network supported military operations during Operation Iraqi Freedom by providing secure transmission of critical targeting information and ground forces command and control data and will continue to ensure necessary communications for deployed forces around the globe.

The Milstar satellite network provides secure communications for the Department of Defense and can transmit voice, data, and imagery, in addition to offering video teleconferencing capabilities. Milstar's "switchboard-in-space" concept allows communications links to be established rapidly, allowing the networking of satellites together in space and eliminating the need for ground relay stations. With the addition of the final spacecraft, the U.S. military now has a global network consisting of five Milstar satellites that provide rapid, global communications coverage for the nation's strategic forces, the Air Force's space warning assets and operationally deployed military forces.

The Milstar communications system is the only survivable, enduring means that the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command have to maintain positive command and control of this nation's strategic forces, according to General Emile Bataille, director of USSTRATCOM's Combat Support Directorate.

The team completed the checkout and testing of all spacecraft systems ahead of the planned schedule and in roughly half the time required for the first Milstar II in 2001. In fact the Milstar team completed the checkout in 55 days rather than the planned 57, according to Lt Col Mike Hirka, the Milstar Program Manager, adding that the team made this complex and difficult task "look simple and easy." The team conducted extensive tests, some of which involved operational command and control assets located at Schriever and Vandenberg Air Force Bases, operational terminals on Navy ships and submarines, and HMMWV (High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle)-mounted EHF satellite terminals and other portable terminals for the tactical warfighter. The satellite passed all tests, meeting or exceeding all mission performance requirements.

"The addition of the final Milstar satellite to an operational status in the constellation provides not only a new national capability, but also caps off a decade of acquisition excellence on the Milstar Block II contract," said Christine Anderson, Director, MILSATCOM Joint Program Office, Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles Air Force Base. "I congratulate the entire government/industry Milstar team for making this final checkout a fantastic success."

Milstar is the Defense Department's most technologically advanced telecommunications satellite system, providing critical, secure links to U.S. national leaders, air, land and sea forces around the globe and has been used to support military operations since 1994. The last satellite features the Medium Data Rate (MDR) payload, built by Boeing Satellite Systems, El Segundo, Calif.

The MDR payload has 32 channels, which can process data at speeds up to 1.5 megabits per second. Increased data rates are used for applications such as command and control, intelligence, distribution of air tasking orders and targeting updates to the military forces.

The spacecraft also features the Low Data Rate (LDR) payload, built by Northrop Grumman Space Technology, Redondo Beach, Calif. Northrop Grumman also supplies MDR antennas and the MDR digital processor to Boeing. Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company is the prime contractor, satellite bus provider, and lead systems integrator for Milstar, which are launched aboard Lockheed Martin-built Titan IVB/Centaur rockets from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla.

"Milstar enables our nation's warfighters to securely communicate," said Major Dave Martinson, Chief of MILSATCOM Integration, Headquarters Air Force Space Command. "The medium data rate capability provided by the block II satellites greatly enhances that capability and ensures timely dissemination of vital communication."

Lockheed Martin is also under contract to develop the Department of Defense's next generation of highly secure communications satellites known as the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) system. As envisioned by the Pentagon, the fully operational Advanced EHF constellation will consist of four networked satellites providing coverage of the Earth from 65 degrees north latitude to 65 degrees south. Incorporating the latest technology, AEHF satellites will provide about 10 times the user capacity as Milstar. AEHF satellites will provide improved secure data throughput capability and increased coverage flexibility to regional and global military operations and will be backward compatible with the Milstar I and II system. Northrop Grumman is developing the AEHF payload.

Space & Strategic Missiles is a key element of Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, headquartered in Denver, Colo., one of the major operating units of Lockheed Martin Corporation. Space Systems designs, develops, tests, manufactures and operates a variety of advanced technology systems for military, civil and commercial customers. Chief products include space launch and ground systems, remote sensing and communications satellites for commercial and government customers, advanced space observatories and interplanetary spacecraft, fleet ballistic missiles and missile defense systems.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, Lockheed Martin employs about 125,000 people worldwide and is a global enterprise principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products, and services. The Corporation reported 2002 sales of \$26.6 billion.

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