U.S. Air Force Accepts First Lockheed Martin SBIRS HEO System For Operations

The first Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) Highly Elliptical Orbit (HEO-1) payload and ground system, built by a Lockheed Martin team, has been accepted for operations by the U.S Air Force.

SBIRS is designed to provide early warning of missile launches, and simultaneously support other missions including missile defense, technical intelligence and battlespace awareness.

Acceptance of the HEO-1 system follows a highly successful operational utility evaluation and trial period during which live HEO data was injected into user operational networks providing critical warning and intelligence data. The evaluation demonstrated the significant new capabilities being delivered to the warfighter through the HEO system. This milestone paves the way for United States Strategic Command's formal certification of the HEO-1 system next month.

"The introduction of SBIRS HEO system into operations has provided significantly enhanced early warning and intelligence capabilities for the warfighter," said Jeff Smith, Lockheed Martin's SBIRS vice president. "We look forward to our continued progress in fielding this critical capability and achieving total mission success for our customer."

A second significant milestone for the SBIRS HEO system was reached this week when the Air Force approved entry of HEO-2 into a Development Transfer period, effectively enabling the Air Force to begin assuming operational control of the HEO-2 payload. These two important events will enable the HEO system to enter a two-flight Operational Utility Evaluation and Trial Period in the first quarter of next year.

The SBIRS team is led by the Space Based Infrared Systems Wing at the U.S. Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif. Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, Sunnyvale, Calif., is the SBIRS prime contractor, with Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems, Azusa, Calif., as the payload integrator. Air Force Space Command operates the SBIRS system.

HEO payloads provide an unprecedented infrared view of the battlefield that represents the first steps in an evolving battlespace awareness capability while also providing real-time data on missiles, aircraft and other events.

The team is also progressing through key integration and test activities on the first geosynchronous orbit (GEO) spacecraft, recently completing acoustic testing that demonstrated the satellite's ability to sustain the maximum sound and vibration levels expected during launch into orbit.

The team is now preparing for the next phase of Baseline Integrated System Test (BIST) that will characterize the performance of the satellite and establish a performance baseline for entering thermal vacuum testing. A major program milestone, thermal vacuum testing of the completed GEO-1 space vehicle will validate its performance at temperature extremes greater than those expected during on-orbit operations.

Lockheed Martin's current SBIRS contract includes the two HEO payloads now on-orbit, two GEO satellites, as well as ground-based assets to receive and process the infrared data. The program is in the early stages of adding additional GEO spacecraft and HEO payloads to the planned constellation.

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2007 sales of $41.9 billion.

NOTE TO EDITORS: for low- and high-resolution JPEG image files of SBIRS, please visit our SBIRS web page at: http://www.lockheedmartin.com/sbirs/

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