First Lockheed Martin-Built Milstar Satellite Marks 15 Years On Orbit

The first U.S. Air Force Milstar communications satellite, built by a Lockheed Martinteam, has achieved 15 years of on-orbit operations. Five years beyond its original design life, the satellite is 100 percent mission capable and will continue providing secure, reliable and robust communications to U.S. and Allied Forces around the globe for years to come.

Launched aboard a Titan IV rocket from Cape Canaveral on Feb. 7, 1994, the first Milstar satellite has since been successfully repositioned five times to maximize the system's capabilities and coverage. The satellite has provided over 125,000 hours of communications service with more than 99.5 percent availability to date.

The five-satellite Milstar constellation, which will surpass 50 years of combined successful operations in April 2009, provides a protected, global communication network for the joint forces of the U.S. military and can transmit voice, data, and imagery, in addition to offering video teleconferencing capabilities. The system is the principal survivable, endurable means that the President, the Secretary of Defense and the Commander, U.S. Strategic Command have to maintain positive command and control of the nation's strategic forces.

"The Milstar team takes great pride in the constellation's impressive record of performance and longevity," said Kevin Bilger, Lockheed Martin's vice president and general manager of Global Communications Systems. "For over 15 years, Milstar has served as the backbone of secure military communications and will continue to be a pivotal national security asset well into the future."

The Milstar team is led by the Military Satellite Communications Systems Wing, located at the Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif. Lockheed Martin Space Systems, Sunnyvale, Calif. is the prime contractor, satellite bus provider, lead systems integrator, and ground command & control provider.

Lockheed Martin, along with Northrop Grumman Aerospace Systems, Redondo Beach, Calif., is also progressing on the U.S. Air Force's protected and highly secure communications satellite system known as the Advanced Extremely High Frequency (AEHF) program.

AEHF satellites will replace the Milstar constellation and increase data rates by a factor of five and the number of connections by a factor of two, permitting transmission of more tactical military communications, such as real-time video, battlefield maps and targeting data. The first AEHF spacecraft has completed initial thermal vacuum testing and is planned for delivery to the Air Force in 2010.

The Lockheed Martin/Northrop Grumman team is leveraging its 25 years of experience in building advanced, protected military communications systems in the competition for the next-generation Transformational Satellite Communications System (TSAT) program. TSAT provides significantly more capacity and connections than the Milstar and AEHF systems, improving availability of protected satellite communications for future military operations.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security company that employs about 146,000 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 2008 sales of $42.7 billion.

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