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

PRNewswire
SUNNYVALE, Calif.

The Lockheed Martin -led team developing the Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) announced today that the second Highly Elliptical Orbit (HEO-2) payload and ground system modifications have been accepted for operations by the U.S. Air Force, paving the way for U.S. Strategic Command's formal certification of the HEO-2 system next month.

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

Announced to be on-orbit in June 2008 by a joint U.S. Air Force/Lockheed Martin team, the HEO-2 payload has been exceeding expectations during its on-orbit test regimen necessary before beginning on-orbit operations for the user.

"HEO performance continues to be spectacular," said Col. Roger Teague, the U.S. Air Force SBIRS Wing Commander. "We are very proud to add the second HEO payload system to our growing constellation. This asset provides outstanding capabilities to combatant commanders and the excellent performance of this second HEO system is a true testament to the teamwork and dedication by the government and industry team."

Acceptance of the HEO-2 system follows a highly successful operational utility evaluation and trial period during which live HEO-2 data was injected into user operational networks providing critical missile warning, missile defense, technical intelligence, and battlespace awareness data.

This milestone paves the way for United States Strategic Command's final certification of the HEO-2 system in August when the sensor and its data will be declared certified for use as part of the U.S. strategic missile warning system.

"We are proud of our partnership with the Air Force in delivering 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."

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.

Lockheed Martin's SBIRS contract includes the two highly elliptical orbit (HEO) payloads now on-orbit, two geosynchronous orbit (GEO) satellites, as well as ground-based assets to receive and process the infrared data. The team was recently awarded a $1.5-billion contract for the third HEO payload, the third GEO-3 satellite and associated ground modifications. A contract to include a fourth HEO payload and potential fourth GEO satellite is expected to be awarded later this year.

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.

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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