



THIRD COSMO-SKYMED SATELLITE LAUNCHED FROM CALIFORNIA

October 24, 2008

The third satellite in the Earth Observation constellation, COSMO-SkyMed, lifted off at 7:28 pm local time today from the Vandenberg Air Force base in California, on a Boeing Delta II rocket .

"This launch is a new, fundamental step to the completion of a system which puts us at the leading edge in the world" commented the Commissioner of the Italian Space Agency Enrico Saggese. *"With three satellites in orbit, and the fourth to be launched soon, Cosmo-SkyMed can offer Earth-observation services and products that would be unthinkable for a single satellite. ASI is working to ensure a long continuation of the programme, with a new generation of satellites already being studied"*.

The COSMO-SkyMed program was originally developed through an agreement between the Italian space agency (ASI) and Ministry of Defense. Thales Alenia Space (Thales/Finmeccanica) is the prime contractor, with responsibility for the entire system. Telespazio (a Finmeccanica/Thales joint-venture) was responsible for manufacturing the civil and military ground segments. It manages the constellation's in-orbit operations and data acquisition and processing. For civil applications, COSMO-SkyMed data are marketed by e-geos, a company created by the Italian Space Agency and Telespazio.

The Italian system COSMO-SkyMed, which represents the first dual-use constellation for Earth Observation, includes four satellites equipped with synthetic-aperture radars capable of "seeing" day or night and under any weather conditions.

"With the launch of the third satellite, the Italian Defense fulfils its commitment to realizing a dual system, with unmatched capabilities and flexibility. Civilian and military users will equally benefit from it." Said Aldo Cinelli, General Secretary of the Italian Defense. *"The Defense, ASI and the Italian industry must be equally proud"*.

The COSMO-SkyMed program is designed to enhance the monitoring and management of our planet for applications including civil protection (management of environmental hazards), defense and security, as well as scientific and commercial applications. The total program cost is approximately 1 billion euros.

"We are obviously very proud – declared Luigi Pasquali, President and CEO of Thales Alenia Space Italia – of the new success reached with the launching of the third satellite of COSMO-SkyMed, an accomplishment carried out by us as prime contractor. Thales Alenia Space has once more shown to have the capacity and the know-how to face the great technological challenge involved in this program which sets the Italian space industry on an equal footing with the most advanced countries worldwide"

This launch follows the two earlier launches, on July 7 and December 9, 2007, both from Vandenberg AFB. With the first two satellites in orbit, COSMO-SkyMed successfully passed all initial tests and became fully operational on August 1, 2008. It has already proven its performance and operational capabilities by supplying images of natural and environmental disasters such as Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar, the earthquake in China in spring 2008, and Hurricanes Hannah and Ike over Haiti in September 2008. These images have often been utilized by the International Institutions and by humanitarian organizations to plan aid efforts.

With the launching of the third satellite, COSMO-SkyMed will further increase its image acquisition and production capacity, to 1,350 images per day from the current capacity of 900 images. The orbital position of the third satellite will allow it to operate in tandem with another satellite, in order to develop interferometry-based applications. This function enables the observation of a given geographic zone at different moments and angles, to measure possible deformations in the earth's surface. COSMO-SkyMed thus enhances its ability to supply services encompassing environmental monitoring, security and hazards management, covering a wide range of application.

"With the launch of the third satellite, the COSMO-SkyMed constellation is approaching the fully operational stage," said Giuseppe Veredice, CEO of Telespazio. "Italy now has a next-generation satellite system that is the only one of its kind in the world thanks to its radar technology and leading-edge performance. The aim now is to introduce the system's potential to the world, and promote a new range of applications and services that up to now have not been available."

The fourth satellite is currently scheduled for launch in early 2010.

Thales Alenia Space Press Contact

Sandrine Bielecki

Tel: +33 (0)4 92 92 70 94 sandrine.bielecki@thalesalieniaspace.com

Laurence Coquillot

Tel: +33 (0)4 92 92 67 66 laurence.coquillot@thalesalieniaspace.com

Italian Space Agency Press Office

Francesco Rea

Tel: +39 06-8567235

francesco.rea@asi.it

Telespazio Press Contact

Paolo Mazzetti

Tel: +39 06-4079 6252

paolo.mazzetti@telespazio.com