

PRESS RELEASE

Successful launch of the Italian satellite SICRAL 1B

Rome, April 20, 2009 – The SICRAL 1B satellite, on behalf of the Italian Ministry of Defense, has been successfully launched today at 10.16 am (CET) by a Zenit-3SL rocket operating from the Sea Launch platform, positioned at the equator in the Pacific Ocean.

The SICRAL 1B program is under the joint responsibility of Thales Alenia Space and Telespazio, partners in the Space Alliance for their parent companies Finmeccanica and Thales.

“As the company responsible for the satellite design and construction” – states Luigi Pasquali, President and CEO for Thales Alenia Space Italia – “We are extremely proud to learn of SICRAL 1B’s perfect launch into orbit. This is a programme to which Thales Alenia Space has contributed with architectural, engineering and technological solutions of undisputed strategic and competitive value. SICRAL 1B is well able to meet the ever increasing challenges posed by the changing global scenarios. The Space Alliance can now proceed with programme completion, and the development and realisation of the SICRAL 2 satellite, in collaboration partnership with France., of the SICRAL 2 satellite. Such a cooperation will be an international synergy for military telecommunication systems ”

“Telespazio has played a key role in the successful launch and early orbit phase of the SICRAL 1B defence satellite,” said Giuseppe Veredice, CEO of Telespazio. “This confirms the long tradition of excellence, professionalism and experience that makes Telespazio one of the world’s leading space operations companies. The satellite testing phase will be carried out over the next few weeks by the Fucino space centre in Abruzzo, which will manage the satellite until operations are transferred to the defence ministry’s Vigna di Valle centre. Having invested directly in the SICRAL 1B programme, Telespazio can now be defined as a satellite operator, since it benefits from some of the satellite’s capacity, allowing it to offer communication services to the European defence market and NATO countries”

Engineering and technological solutions will enable SICRAL 1B to meet the ever increasing challenges posed by the changing global scenarios. Once it is in geostationary orbit at about 36,000 km, SICRAL 1B will provide strategic and tactical communications services for the Italian armed forces, in Italy and abroad, as well as ensuring mobile communications with land, naval and air platforms. It will also provide NATO forces with UHF and SHF satcom capabilities, based on agreements by the Italian, French and British ministries of defence and the Atlantic Alliance.

SICRAL 1B is the second satellite in the SICRAL program, following the launch of SICRAL 1 in 2001. It will expand in-orbit communications capacity to meet the evolving military satellite communications requirements of both Italy and NATO. The new satellite has a design life of 13 years.

For the SICRAL 1B programme, Thales Alenia Space, a Thales/Finmeccanica company, designed the system and built the satellite and Telecommunications Control Centre in Vigna di Valle.

Telespazio, a Finmeccanica/Thales company, is responsible for the launch services, positioning (LEOP - Launch and Early Orbit Phase) and the in-orbit testing of SICRAL 1B. It also managed the building of the system's Ground Segment at the Satellite Control Centre at Vigna di Valle and the Fucino Space Centre.

The SICRAL 1B program is a public-private partnership between the Italian Ministry of Defence and Finmeccanica. Based on this agreement, Telespazio contributed a significant part of the direct costs of the SICRAL 1B program, giving it part of the satellite's capacity. Telespazio can therefore take on the role of satellite operator in selling capacity and services to NATO and to the European and US defence markets.

About Thales Alenia Space

A joint venture between Thales (67%) and Finmeccanica (33%), Thales Alenia Space is the European leader in satellite systems and a major player in orbital infrastructures. Thales Alenia Space sets the global standard in solutions for space telecoms, radar and optical Earth observation, defence and security, navigation and science. The company has a total of 7,200 employees and 11 industrial sites, with locations in France, Italy, Spain and Belgium. www.thalesaleniaspace.com

About Telespazio

A joint venture between Finmeccanica (67%) and Thales (33%), Telespazio is one of the world's leading operators in satellite services. The Rome-based company employs around 1,700 staff, and operates a network of four space centres and 25 sites spread all over the world. Telespazio plays a leading role in the reference markets harnessing technological experience acquired over the years and through its participation in major European space programmes. www.telespazio.com

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