

Press Release

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National defence CNES expertise serving France's forces

As France prepares for its traditional 14 July national celebrations and military parade, CNES is proud to highlight its relationship with French forces. Since its inception in 1961, the agency has worked closely with the Ministry for Armed Forces—one of its overseeing ministries with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation—to conduct space programmes, R&T projects and satellite operations, as well as on space surveillance and tracking. This combined action is key to France's military capabilities and the security of our citizens.

In conducting space programmes, CNES has developed extensive know-how in satellites and system architectures. In certain cases it is delegated oversight responsibility by DGA, the French defence procurement agency, for space segments and dual-use civil/military systems. The work done within this framework with DGA and Joint Staff (EMA) aims to meet forces' requirements while ensuring the best value for money.

CNES's R&T work with the Ministry for Armed Forces is geared towards meeting future military needs, including development of technological innovations for very-high-resolution optical Earth observation, signals intelligence (SIGINT) and highly secure telecommunications. These innovations also benefit civil stakeholders, as dual-use technologies bring down the cost of operational capabilities for users while enabling French industry to maintain its competitive edge.

CNES also operates military satellites in low Earth orbit, tasking them in accordance with armed forces' requests and keeping them safe from a range of threats, particularly space debris. These actions are carried out in close coordination with the French air force. Here, CNES and Joint Space Command (CIE) work together through the steering committee of the consortium of five European nations—France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom—that is providing space surveillance and tracking services (conjunction assessment and tracking of atmospheric re-entry risks) for satellite operators.

Cooperation between CNES and the Ministry for Armed Forces will see the launch of the first of the three satellites in the CSO¹ optical constellation from the Guiana Space Centre at the end of this year. CSO will succeed the Helios 2 satellites and strengthen the armed forces' space-based intelligence capabilities for strategic reconnaissance and support to remote theatres of operations.

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