

Press Release

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National defence CNES expertise serving French 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 Chiefs of 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 includes 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 maintains military and dual-use satellites on station in low Earth orbit, tasks them in accordance with armed forces' requirements and keeps them safe from risks, particularly space debris. These actions are carried out in close coordination with the French air force. CNES and Joint Space Command (CIE) also work together through the steering committee of the EU-SST consortium of eight European nations—France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain and the United Kingdom—that are sharing their assets to provide space surveillance and tracking services (conjunction assessment and tracking of atmospheric re-entry risks) for more than 120 European satellites.

As a testament to this fruitful cooperation between CNES and the Ministry for Armed Forces, the first of the three satellites in the CSO¹ optical constellation was launched from the Guiana Space Centre at the end of last year and earlier this week CNES and Airbus signed the contract for the CO3D² optical observation programme. With CSO, France's armed forces are acquiring highly sophisticated optical observation capabilities in the visible and infrared. And with COD3, they will have the ability from 2022 to generate a very precise global digital surface model and to acquire stereo imagery at sub-metric resolution (50 cm) at short revisit intervals. The dual-use constellation of four CO3D satellites will deliver a wealth of data to serve the needs of the military and the scientific community.

1 Composante Spatiale Optique

2 Constellation Optique en 3D

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