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MINISTER OF ARMED FORCES FLORENCE PARLY VISITS THE TOULOUSE SPACE CENTRE AND NEW FRENCH SPACE COMMAND HEADQUARTERS

Friday 21 February, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall, General Philippe Lavigne, Air Force Chief of Staff, Thierry Angel, Deputy Head, Forces, of the French defence procurement agency DGA, and General Michel Friedling, Chief of Space Command, welcomed the Minister of Armed Forces Florence Parly to the Toulouse Space Centre (CST). Ever since its inception in 1961, CNES has worked closely with the Ministry for Armed Forces—one of its overseeing ministries with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation—and is today a vital cog in the conduct of military space programmes, execution of space operations and planning for the future.

On 13 July 2019, President Emmanuel Macron announced the creation of a Space Command (CDE, for Commandement de l'Espace) within the Air Force, which is set to become the Air and Space Force. After its official inception on 3 September 2019, the CDE is continuing to ramp up in pursuit of its mission to implement the nation's military space strategy. To exploit all possible synergies and CNES's status as the national centre of excellence in space, the Minister of Armed Forces directed that the CDE be headquartered in a dedicated building at the CST.

During her visit, the Minister of Armed Forces was able to see how CNES and CDE teams are working together to execute the military space strategy she outlined on 25 July 2019 at Lyon Mont-Verdun air base. The main lines of this strategy seek to strengthen space support capabilities for joint force operations, enhance space situational awareness and be ready to conduct defensive operations in space.

The Minister of Armed Forces also had the opportunity to talk with operators of the CSO-1 military reconnaissance satellite orbited from the Guiana Space Centre (CSG) on 19 December 2018. This spring, it will be the turn of CSO-2 to be launched from the CSG. Teams at the CST have worked very closely on the CSO programme for which CNES has delegated oversight responsibility for the satellites and mission ground segment from the French procurement agency DGA. The first images are of remarkable quality, confirming the know-how and expertise of CNES, the Air Force and industry contractors working on the programme.

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