

## Airbus next-generation Skynet satellite reaches major milestone

**Stevenage, UK, 20 May 2025** – The UK's next-generation military communications satellite - Skynet 6A - has successfully completed the coupling of its communications and service modules.

The spacecraft - designed and built at Airbus' Stevenage and Portsmouth plants - will provide vital communications services for Britain's armed forces and achieved the major milestone at the National Satellite Test Facility (NSTF) in Harwell, Oxfordshire. The NSTF is operated by the Science and Technology Facilities Council's RAL Space.

"This significant development in the programme will allow Airbus to complete final baseline testing at our Stevenage site, followed by environmental testing back at NSTF later this year," said Airbus Defence and Space UK Chairman Ben Bridge.

"Skynet 6A is the next-generation, fully-hardened military satellite for the Ministry of Defence. It has three-and-a-half times the capacity of the UK's current Skynet 5 military satellites and is due to enter service in 2027."

The Airbus Skynet satellite programme has provided the UK military with sovereign capability for the past 50 years and the 6A spacecraft builds on that wealth of home-grown experience to incorporate new, innovative capabilities to meet the changing requirements of the armed forces for the foreseeable future.

"Congratulations to Airbus Defence and Space, RAL Space and the MOD project team on achieving this impressive milestone," said Barry Austin, Skynet Programme Manager at Defence Digital. "This marks a significant achievement for the Skynet 6 programme and the UK space sector as a whole. Once operational, Skynet 6A will enhance and be critical to our Armed Forces' military satellite communications capability and ensure they continue to receive world-class connectivity globally."

This is the first time that a large, geostationary-orbit (GEO) communications satellite has been coupled in the UK. Skynet 6A is also the first spacecraft to use the new NSTF during this initial year of operation by RAL Space; earlier this year 6A's antennas were successfully tested in the NSTF's electromagnetic compatibility facility.

"Welcoming our first customers represents a significant achievement for the NSTF, and we are proud to support Airbus with the integration and testing of Skynet 6A," said Sean Stewart, Head of Environmental Test at RAL Space. "This milestone is a testament to the dedication of all involved and marks an exciting step for the UK as we prepare to host many more satellites of this scale."

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Skynet 6A will provide the UK with next-generation military communications © AIRBUS

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