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SAR-Lupe, Germany's first satellite-based reconnaissance system, now completed

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DLR once again in charge of putting the radar satellite into operation



The five SAR-Lupe satellites

This morning, the fifth German reconnaissance satellite of the SAR-Lupe system was launched successfully from the Russian Plesetsk Cosmodrome south of Archangelsk. The Russian Cosmos-3M launch vehicle took off according to schedule at 4.40 Central European Summer Time (CEST) and about half an hour later released the radar satellite into its low Earth orbit, about 500 kilometres from the ground. The first communication between the German Space Operations Center (Deutsches Raumfahrt-Kontrollzentrum) of the German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) in Oberpfaffenhofen and the satellite showed that the satellite is functioning faultlessly. DLR has already started to put the satellite into operation.

The DLR German Space Operations Center in Oberpfaffenhofen will have operational control over the fifth SAR-Lupe satellite until it is transferred to the Bundeswehr (German Federal Armed Forces); the Space Operations Center will then assume backup control. Thomas Reiter, DLR Executive Board member for space research and development, said: "At DLR, we have a wealth of experience in positioning satellites and taking them into operation. Our Space Control Center in Oberpfaffenhofen has performed these tasks with great commitment and completed them successfully for the five SAR-Lupe satellites as well.

With SAR-Lupe 5, Germany's first satellite-supported reconnaissance system is completed. It consists of five identical small satellites and a ground station which is used to control the satellite and for receiving and processing the image data.

For OHB-System AG in Bremen, which as the prime contractor of the Federal Office of Defense Technology and Procurement (Bundesamt für Wehrtechnik und Beschaffung; BWB) developed the overall system while overseeing a consortium of well-known European space technology companies, this successful launch means a glorious ending to yet another chapter of this success story. Today, Professor Manfred Fuchs, Chief Executive Officer of OHB-Systems AG, said: "This is a very special day for OHB. For our team, the successful launch of the fifth satellite concludes an important development and integration programme. During this project, we have been able to give an impressive demonstration of our technological know-how, and we have proven to be a competent and reliable partner for the Bundeswehr."

Since December 2007 already, the SAR-Lupe system has provided the Bundeswehr with a space-based system for collecting top quality information, with practically global coverage and independently of daylight and of the weather conditions. Within the framework of the ESGA project (Europäisierung der satellitengestützten Aufklärung; Europeanization of Satellite-based Reconnaissance), OHB has provided the technological basis needed to enable France to use the German radar system as well. In return, France has granted Germany access to the HELIOS II optical reconnaissance system.



Launch of SAR-Lupe 5

Vice Admiral Wolfram Kühn, Deputy Inspector General of the Bundeswehr and Inspector of the Joint Support Service (Streitkräftebasis), said on the occasion of the successful launch: "SAR-Lupe takes the quality of support at the Bundeswehr, and thus in Germany as whole, for early crisis warning, crisis prevention and effective crisis management to a completely new level. Timely and unimpeded access to high-resolution satellite images is of vital importance for improving situation assessment methods and thereby for improving Germany's capacity to judge situations, take action and make decisions. In terms of military policy, SAR-Lupe brings Germany up to par with other countries with regard to space-based imaging reconnaissance. The system forms the basis of an even closer Franco-German cooperation, which has already been put into practice since January. In addition to this it enables us to contribute our own experience to the discussions about follow-up systems, which are already in full swing. All things considered, it enhances the quality and effectiveness of our involvement in international consultation and decision-making processes."

The Bundeswehr's ground station in Gelsdorf near Bonn will track the satellite in parallel to DLR's activities, and after about four weeks, it will take over operational control. The SAR-Lupe system will be fully operational in the autumn.

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