

**News Archive Space 2010**

**DLR begins operating a second communications satellite for the German armed forces**

*22 May 2010*



On 21 May 2010, the 50th Ariane 5 lifted off from Kourou

**COMSATBw-2 launched successfully onboard 50th Ariane 5**

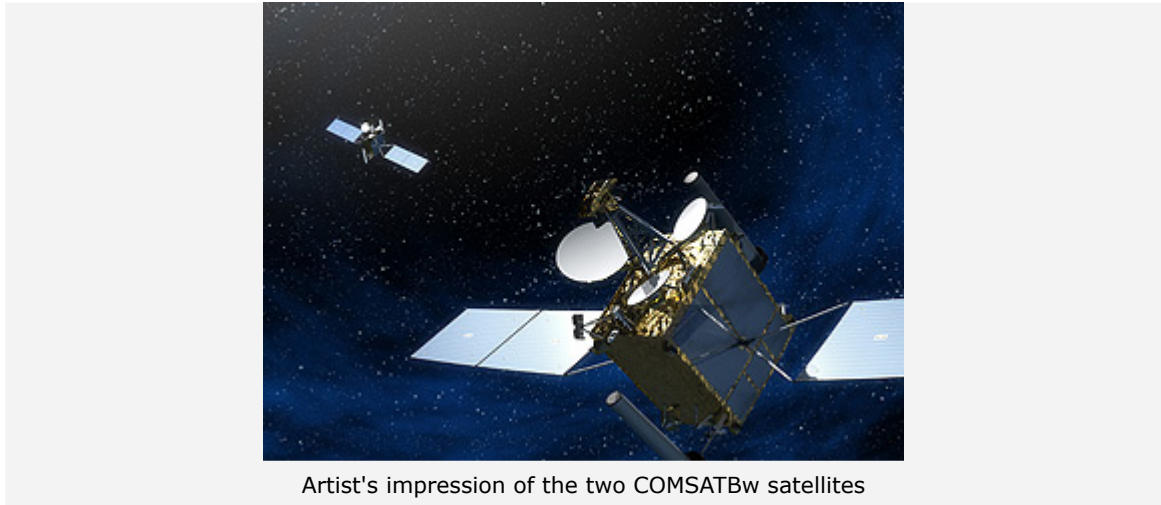
On Friday, 21 May 2010 at 19:01 local time (22 Mai, 00:01 Central European Time), the 50th Ariane 5 launcher lifted off on schedule from Europe's Spaceport at Kourou in French Guiana. The payload for this mission comprised the Astra 3B commercial telecommunication satellite and the second communications satellite for the German armed forces (Bundeswehr), COMSATBw-2. The German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) is responsible for the orbital positioning and flight operations of this satellite, and has also been involved in a range of comprehensive propulsion unit tests which have played a significant role in the success story of the Ariane launch vehicles. This flight, V194, was the first Ariane flight of 2010, the 50th liftoff for an Ariane 5 and the 194th mission for the Ariane family of launchers.

**First radio contact after 33 minutes**

"Thirty-three minutes after the launch, we established radio contact with the 2.5-ton COMSATBw-2 satellite via the antennas of the Indian ground station in Bangalore. Seventy DLR scientists and engineers were involved in taking control of the spacecraft," reports Thomas Kuch - Director of Mission Operations for the **German Space Operations Center (GSOC)** - at DLR Oberpfaffenhofen. GSOC has

been running successful space missions since 1968. At present, DLR has five satellites for scientific and commercial Earth observation under its control, as well as the European research laboratory Columbus on the International Space Station (ISS).

#### **COMSATBw-1 in orbit since October 2009**



Artist's impression of the two COMSATBw satellites

In October 2009, flight engineers at GSOC took control of COMSATBw-1, the Germany armed forces' first communications satellite. "COMSATBw-2 will also be positioned by the Space Operations Center in a geostationary orbit over the next few weeks, at an altitude of approximately 36,000 kilometres. In other words, it will be 'parked' in its intended orbital position," explains Thomas Kuch as he runs through the next steps for this mission. This will be followed by the 'commissioning' or initial operation of the satellite subsystems. Antennas and solar panels will be deployed and subjected to in-orbit tests lasting several weeks. In the course of these tests, the satellite will be configured for its intended application.

"Following the successful operational acceptance of COMSATBw-2 in orbit, the new satellite system will be handed over for regular operations, which are scheduled to last for the next 15 years. At DLR, 30 members of staff will be involved in these operations," states Mission Operations Director Kuch.

The satellites COMSATBw-1 and COMSATBw-2 form part of the German armed forces' SATCOMBw programme. Alongside the two communications satellites, this system includes stations and monitoring equipment on ground, and - for the first time - it facilitates autonomous, worldwide transmission of voice and data as well as video and multimedia applications. The entire system is scheduled to commence full-scale operations by early 2011.

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