

Skynet 5B joins satellite constellation with CSIR's help

The critical role of supporting the launch of Skynet 5B, the second satellite of the Skynet 5 programme, was once again handed to the tracking, telemetry and command experts at the CSIR Satellite Applications Centre by French space agency, CNES (Centre National D'Étude Spatiales). The British military communications satellite was launched at 22:06 Greenwich Mean Time from the Ariane Launch Complex No. 3 (ELA 3) in Kourou, French Guiana, on 14 November 2007. It forms part of a next-generation space-based military communications system.

The CSIR's Tiaan Strydom confirms that the launch support went well. "As the 5B satellite takes about 20 days to settle into its new geostationary orbit at 53 degrees east of Greenwich, the CSIR continued to provide support for the following week," he notes. The CSIR supported the Skynet 5A launch in March 2007.

Skynet 5 is unusual among military satellite communications ('chat sats') projects as it is privately owned. The operational life of Skynet 5B is expected to exceed 15 years, like that of the other Skynet 5 satellites.

French company [Arianespace](#) said the launch had set a new record for Ariane V, with 8 700 kg of payload delivered. Both the Skynet spacecraft and a Brazilian telecommunications platform were sent on their journey to geostationary orbit. Arianespace was the world's first commercial space transportation company and undertakes the production, operation and marketing of the Ariane V rocket launcher as part of the Ariane programme.



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