

UK defence teams up with world leading UK space company to secure next generation of military communications

Built by Airbus Defence and Space, SKYNET 6A will soar among the stars, guaranteeing our Armed Forces fast, secure and reliable communications from thousands of miles above, wherever they are deployed.

SKYNET 6A will use some of the most advanced technology available, including a higher radio frequency spectrum and the latest in digital processing to provide more capacity, speed and greater versatility than its predecessor system the SKYNET 5 constellation.

The £500 million boost is the latest investment in the technological safeguards that help our Armed Forces deter threats from anywhere in the world, including Russia and China. This will secure UK leadership in defensive space and cyber operations for generations to come.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

To safeguard our military on operations around the world we need to ensure that we protect their communications on land, sea or in air. The newest contested frontier is space and so we need to provide resilience and better communications for our forces. SKYNET 6A is one of many solutions we shall be investing in over the next decade. This Government recognises the urgent need to defend and promote space capabilities.

This new satellite will continue to be controlled from the UK's existing ground stations, allowing for greater flexibility and security.

Effective and secure satellite communications are essential to support troops on the ground, and with the development of SKYNET 6A our personnel can continue to rely on space for secure communications until 2040 and beyond.

Built and assembled in the UK, the SKYNET 6A contract will sustain 550 highly skilled jobs, making good on the Government's commitment to drive employment across the UK. Airbus Defence & Space is the UK arm of the Airbus firm. Completing the work in the UK will ensure SKYNET 6A remains a sovereign capability with the very best technology the private sector has to offer.

Science Minister Amanda Solloway said:

Space technology plays an important role in supporting our military and keeping us safe, while also boosting the UK's economy and enabling world-leading science and research.

With this major investment in Skynet 6A, the development of the National Satellite Test Facility and the launch of a dedicated innovation programme, we are setting a bold new ambition for the UK in space.

The contract covers all aspects of the satellite's development. From the design, manufacture, and assembly stages, to integration, testing and finally the launch, SKYNET 6A will revolutionise the way defence is able to communicate.

SKYNET 6A is a modern design that exploits the latest technologies available from Airbus Defence and Space. The satellite will use the new Airbus Eurostar Neo telecommunications satellite platform coupled with electric orbit raising propulsion and station keeping systems.