

# Bird & Bird Satellite Bulletin

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## *Significant increase in French spending on military space programmes*

In response to the terrorist attacks that occurred in Paris on 13 November 2015 President François Hollande announced that France's military resources and capabilities would be significantly reinforced in a formal address to the Congress of the French Parliament gathered at Versailles on 16 November 2015. In particular, he identified intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance as top priorities.

The Budget Act for 2016 therefore not only supports the efforts announced by François Hollande to increase security of French citizens at home and abroad but also confirms significant investment on space-based communications and intelligence capabilities. The budget allocated to the French military space sector will reach €498.1 million in 2016, compared with an amount of €152.2 million in 2015.

The 2016 French military space investment will focus on the renewal and broadening of French military space assets through the implementation of the following three programmes:

- the Comsat NG military satellite communications system - France's follow-on to the existing Syracuse 3 telecommunications satellites in geostationary orbit;
- the Multinational Space-based Imaging System (MUSIS) - is a European surveillance programme intended to supply visible, radar and infrared imagery and replace previous national platforms including France's Helios 2; and
- the three-satellite CERES electronic intelligence system (French acronym for Space-based Electromagnetic Intelligence Capacity), which will use three formation-flying satellites detecting and locating radio communications and radars.

These space programmes will contribute to give France space capabilities which are amongst the most sophisticated in the world. In relation to the order of two new communications satellites by the French defence procurement agency (DGA), in the framework of the COMSAT NG programme, the French Ministry of Defence declared in a recent press release:

*“Essential means for long-distance communications, satellite communication systems are a fundamental cornerstone for information control which is key to the superiority of our forces. Information control allows at all levels, from the strategic level to the battle zone, to assess the situation and carry out operations”.*

Space-based communication, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities will undoubtedly be an invaluable resource for France and its allies in their long-term fight against terrorism.

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Our international team offers clients a one-stop shop to address the issues they face, with expert lawyers across Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and strong experience in Africa.

Our satellite group fits neatly within Bird & Bird's world leading Tech & Comms sector group, which offers advice in related sectors such as: energy and utilities, life sciences, transport and maritime, aerospace, defence and security, aviation, financial services, and healthcare. Bird & Bird also house a team focused on SMEs and the needs of start-ups.

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