Ariane 5 lifts record payload into space

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This morning (Aug.11) an Ariane 5G launcher lifted off from Europe's Spaceport in French Guiana. On board was the largest telecommunications satellite ever to be placed into geostationary transfer orbit.

The mission was initially delayed during the two-hour-long launch window to verify telemetry readings from Ariane 5's mobile launch table, and the countdown subsequently resumed for an early morning takeoff from the ELA-3 launch zone.

The heavyweight THAICOM 4 (IPSTAR) satellite had a lift-off mass of almost 6500 kg. Before this morning's launch, the record for the heaviest telecommunications satellite to be placed into orbit belonged to the Anik F2 satellite, launched by an Ariane 5 launcher in July 2004.

THAICOM 4, built for Shin Satellite Plc of Thailand, will provide businesses and consumers throughout Asia, Australia and New Zealand with various levels of Internet access services. The satellite has a total data throughput capacity of over 45 Gbps. This is the fourth Shin Satellite to be launched by an Ariane vehicle. An Ariane 4 vehicle launched the first satellite in 1993.

The next launch to take place from Europe's Spaceport will be Flight 168, an Ariane 5G dual launch mission scheduled for 29 September.