

MetOp satellite shipped to Baikonur on 18 April

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MetOp-A satellite undergoing final testing at EADS Astrium's facilities in Toulouse. Credits: EADS Astrium/photo C. Mériaux

The first MetOp meteorological satellite arrived yesterday at its launch site, the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, following shipment from the industrial prime contractor, EADS Astrium in Toulouse, on board an Antonov-124 transport plane.

MetOp-A is the first in a series of three EUMETSAT Polar System (EPS) satellites developed by the European Space Agency (ESA) for EUMETSAT, the European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites. After undergoing a mechanical and environmental test campaign, the spacecraft passed the acceptance review last year and the recent compatibility test between satellite and ground segment cleared the way for shipment of the satellite to Baikonur.

This shipment comprises a service module, a payload module and the solar array, including the electrical and mechanical ground support equipment needed for the launch campaign. The mission includes a total of 12 instruments developed in cooperation with French Space Agency, CNES, and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

MetOp is scheduled for launch on 17 July 2006 at 22.28 Baikonur time (18.28 CEST) with the latest Soyuz ST Fregat launcher operated by Starsem.

MetOp is the first polar orbiting satellite dedicated to operational meteorology. The MetOp satellite services have been designed to provide global weather data until 2020. MetOp, which will fly at a height of about 837 km, promises, with its 12 sophisticated instruments, to provide data of unprecedented accuracy, thus improving global weather forecasting and providing enhanced climate monitoring capabilities.

Source: European Space Agency

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