

Thales Alenia wins Iridium deal for 81 satellites: company

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Thales Alenia Space has won a contract worth 2.1 billion dollars (1.7 billion euros) for a giant programme to build 81 communications satellites for US group Iridium, Iridium said on Wednesday.

The European group beat US company [Lockheed Martin](#) in bidding for the work.

The chief executive at Iridium Matt Desch said that the project marked a turning point in the history of the US company.

The privatised French export-credit guarantee company Coface is to underwrite 95 percent of dollar-credit facilities totalling 1.8 billion dollars.

Thales Alenia Space is 67-percent owned by French group Thales and 33 percent by Italian company Finmeccanica.

The contract is for 72 satellites to be launched into low orbit from 2015, and nine replacement satellites to be held ready on earth. They will carry upgraded third-generation class mobile communications services.

Thales Alenia Space said that facilities in France, Italy and Belgium would be involved in the project, and that 350 people would be working on the contract for seven years.

Iridium has yet to allocate a contract worth 800 million dollars for the

construction of launchers.

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