

Europe's Arianespace inks new deals at US conference

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A handout picture released by the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2011 shows Soyuz VS01 rocket on the launch pad at the Arianespace spaceport in Sinnamary, 12km from Kourou, French Guiana. European satellite launch operator Arianespace announced at a satellite expo in Washington Tuesday that it had signed two new contracts this week for launches in the coming years.

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Arianespace on Monday inked a deal to launch a communications orbiter with satellite provider Eutelsat and a Qatari operator, and Tuesday unveiled another deal with Australian operator Newsat.

It's "a good start to the year," Arianespace boss Jean-Yves Le Gall told

AFP at the Satellite 2012 conference.

Le Gall said the company has a record backlog of orders worth 4.7 billion euros.

Since the start of the year, Arianespace has signed with the European Commission contracts to launch 12 Galileo satellites by Ariane 5 launchers.

This year it will conduct six or seven launches by the heavy lifter Ariane 5, and five by the medium-sized Soviet-Russian space veteran Soyuz.

On February 14 Arianespace conducted the first launch using the [new rocket](#) Vega, which showcased the lightweight launcher's capacity to place a 1.5-ton satellite into low-Earth orbit.

For 2011, the company is expected to announce total revenues of more than one billion euros (1.3 billion dollars) and is set break even.

Last year, [Arianespace](#) carried out five [Ariane 5](#) launches and four [Soyuz](#) launches, including the first from Europe's space base in Kourou, French Guiana.

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