

Thailand to buy Airbus satellite as junta chief visits France: source

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Thailand's junta chief will secure the purchase of a \$215 million observation satellite from Airbus during his trip to France this month, a diplomatic source said Friday, as Europe re-engages with the kingdom following a chill in relations after a 2014 coup.

General Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who toppled an elected government four years ago, will stop in Britain and France next week for meetings with political and [business leaders](#).

The trip comes after the European Union agreed to resume official contacts with Thailand in December, ending a more than three-year suspension put in place after Prayut's May 2014 coup installed the country's most authoritarian government in a generation.

European aviation giant Airbus is expected to announce the sale of the Theos-II satellite while Prayut pays a visit to French President Emmanuel Macron on June 25, according to a diplomatic source in Bangkok.

"The negotiation for the contract of the satellite Theos-II has succeeded," the source told AFP.

"It is not a military satellite, it was developed to check on agriculture and coastal erosion," the source added.

Airbus, which built Thailand's first [satellite](#) Theos in 2008, could not be

reached for comment.

Prayut will also meet with British Prime Minister Theresa May in London on June 20, before he heads to France for a trip that includes a stop at Airbus assembly lines in Toulouse on June 22.

France is the second largest exporter to Thailand behind Germany and Britain, with more than half of its exports in the "aircraft and spacecraft" sector.

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