



ASECNA, in conjunction with NIGCOMSAT and Thales Alenia Space to accelerate SBAS development for aviation in Africa

ASECNA, NIGCOMSAT Ltd and Thales Alenia Space joining efforts through SBAS flight demonstrations at Lomé International Airport

Lome, January 28, 2021 – The Agency for Air Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar, ASECNA, the Nigerian Communications Satellite Ltd, NIGCOMSAT and Thales Alenia Space, joint venture between Thales (67 %) and Leonardo (33 %) joint efforts to accelerate SBAS development for aviation in Africa.

Following the broadcast of a SBAS (Satellite-Based Augmentation System) signal over Africa & Indian Ocean (AFI) region since September 2020, providing the first SBAS open service in this part of the world via NIGCOMSAT-1R Satellite, the 3 partners have successfully conducted on 27 January 2021 a series of 5 flight demos at Lomé International Airport. The goal was to show in real configuration the efficiency of the technology developed in the frame of the early open service as part of the « SBAS for Africa & Indian Ocean » programme which pursues the autonomous provision over the continent of SBAS services, to augment the performances of the satellite navigation constellations GPS and Galileo.

These tests were carried out by means of the ASECNA calibration aircraft (ATR42-300), which has been equipped for the occasion by Pildo Labs with specific sensors and embarked VIPs and pilots in 5 rotations over Lome airport. The aim of the experiment was to demonstrate the ability of the system to allow landings on the two ends of the runway without deployment of local ground infrastructure and with a performance level close to the use of Instrument Landing Systems (ILS). It demonstrates the benefits of the future operational safety-of-life SBAS services, expected from 2024, in terms of flight safety, efficiency and of environmental protection.

The outcomes of the demonstrations, as a crucial step forward the provision and use of satellite navigation services in the Africa and Indian Ocean region, will be debriefed on 28 and 29 January during an international outreach event on SBAS in aviation in Africa, gathering airlines, aircraft manufacturers and other aviation stakeholders from all over the world.

“We are proud to support the SBAS for Africa & Indian Ocean open service and to have contributed to the success of these inflight demos using our geostationary communication satellite NIGCOMSAT-1R navigation payload”, declared Dr. Abimbola Alale, MD/CEO of NIGCOMSAT Ltd. “The SBAS demonstration flight feat is in line with policy direction of the Honorable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy of Federal Republic of Nigeria; Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami) FNCS, FBCS, FIIM for value addition and propensity not only in the Telecommunications Sector but Aviation, Maritime, Rail Transport, Precision Agriculture, Survey, Oil & Gas and Mass-Market Applications for sustainable development beyond Nigerian shores”.

“Our longstanding expertise acquired with the development of EGNOS¹ SBAS in Europe and KASS SBAS in Korea combined with our new leading-edge satellite positioning technologies makes Thales Alenia Space the ideal partner to best support countries to implement their own SBAS efficiently. We hope these series of demos will help to accelerate SBAS adoption in aviation in Africa”, declared Benoit Broudy, Vice President Navigation business at Thales Alenia Space.

“I’m proud to have demonstrated the utility and efficiency of the SBAS services in the continent. This event will bolster the deployment of the “SBAS for Africa & Indian Ocean” system, the navigation solution for Africa by Africa, which will enhance air navigation safety and efficiency for the benefit of the whole continent, in line with my vision for the unification of the African Sky”, stated Mohamed Moussa, Director General of ASECNA.

¹ European Geostationary Navigation Overlay System

About ASECNA

ASECNA is an International public organisation. Its main mission is to provide air navigation services within an airspace of 16,500,000 square kilometers, divided into six flight information regions (F.I.R) as defined by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). ASECNA also develops solutions for airport management, aviation infrastructure studies and construction, equipment maintenance, calibration of air navigation instruments and training for civil aviation staff. Its 18 Member States are: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, France, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Togo.

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About Thales Alenia Space

Drawing on over 40 years of experience and a unique combination of skills, expertise and cultures, Thales Alenia Space delivers cost-effective solutions for telecommunications, navigation, Earth observation, environmental management, exploration, science and orbital infrastructures. Governments and private industry alike count on Thales Alenia Space to design satellite-based systems that provide anytime, anywhere connections and positioning, monitor our planet, enhance management of its resources, and explore our Solar System and beyond. Thales Alenia Space sees space as a new horizon, helping to build a better, more sustainable life on Earth. A joint venture between Thales (67%) and Leonardo (33%), Thales Alenia Space also teams up with Telespazio to form the parent companies’ Space Alliance, which offers a complete range of services. Thales Alenia Space posted consolidated revenues of approximately 2.15 billion euros in 2019 and has around 7,700 employees in nine countries.

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About NIGCOMSAT

Nigerian Communications Satellite Ltd (NIGCOMSAT) is a company and agency under the Federal Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy whose mission is to be the leading satellite operator and service provider in Africa. NIGCOMSAT Ltd owns and operates the Nigerian Communications Satellite. The company provides innovative and cutting-edge satellite communications solutions by operating and managing a geostationary communication satellite-NigComSat-1R, built to provide domestic and international satellite services via a 2-way satellite communications services across West, Central, South East Africa, Europe and Asia. The satellite is a hybrid Communication Satellite with a payload for navigation overlay services (NOS) system similar to EGNOS.

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