



ASECNA teams up with NIGCOMSAT and Thales Alenia Space to continue developing SBAS aviation services in Africa

Latest step is a SBAS helicopter demonstration flight between Douala and Kribi in Cameroon

Douala, June 3, 2021 – The Agency for Air Navigation Safety in Africa and Madagascar (ASECNA), Nigerian Communications Satellite Ltd. (NIGCOMSAT) and Thales Alenia Space, the joint venture between Thales (67%) and Leonardo (33%), are working together to accelerate the development of SBAS (Satellite-Based Augmentation System) services for aviation in Africa.

Exploiting the SBAS signal they are broadcasting over the Africa & Indian Ocean (AFI) region since September 2020, providing the first SBAS open service in this part of the world via the NigComSat-1R satellite, and following up the flight demonstrations performed successfully in last January at Lomé Gnassingbe Eyadéma International Airport, the three partners conducted on June 2nd 2021 a successful SBAS demonstration flight between Douala and Kribi in Cameroon with a rotorcraft.

The aim was to show on the field the effectiveness of this technology developed as part of the “SBAS for Africa & Indian Ocean” programme, designed to autonomously provide SBAS services across the continent, thus improving the performance of the global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), GPS and Galileo.

The rotorcraft carried out a low-altitude, two-way demonstration flight along a low-level route linking two point-in-space (PinS) approaches to the Douala airport and a point near the oil platforms off the Kribi coast. The helicopter was provided by Heli Union and the SBAS receiver by Pildo Labs. This experimental flight demonstrated the ability of the SBAS service to improve navigation safety and efficiency, in view of the operational SBAS services expected to be delivered in 2024.

On June 3 and 4 in Douala, a seminar organized with the EGNOS-Africa JPO will host representatives of major aviation institutions in Cameroon to raise awareness about the development of SBAS aviation services in Africa.

“We will continue to support and contribute to the success of SBAS flight demonstrations using NIGCOMSAT-1R navigation payload to sensitize stakeholders towards acceptance and adoption of SBAS technology in Africa’s Aviation sector for its many benefits especially as it concerns improvement of operational safety, reduction in operational costs and environment”, declared Dr. Abimbola Alale, MD/CEO of NIGCOMSAT Ltd. *“It is in line with marching order and directive of the Honorable Minister of Communications and Digital Economy of Federal Republic of Nigeria; Dr. Isa Ali Ibrahim (Pantami) FNCS, FBCS, FIIM who has directed full exploitation of the capabilities and capacity of NIGCOMSAT-1R satellite for digitalized economy in all sectors for sustainable development in the continent.”*

“Thales Alenia Space is the ideal partner to support countries that want to implement their own SBAS system, based on our proven expertise in developing EGNOS¹ for Europe and KASS for South Korea, coupled with our advanced satellite positioning technologies,” said Benoit Broudy, Vice President, Navigation Business Unit at Thales Alenia Space *“This latest demonstration proved the service’s ability to improve satellite navigation for helicopters, in addition to civil planes, and it will help accelerate the rollout of SBAS aeronautical services in Africa.”*

“I’m proud that we were able to demonstrate the utility and efficiency of SBAS services on our continent for all the community of airspace users, from commercial aviation to general aviation, and including rotorcraft,” said Mohamed Moussa, Director General of ASECNA. *“In line with my vision of unification of the African Sky, the upcoming deployment of the ‘SBAS for Africa & Indian Ocean’ system, the navigation solution for Africa and by Africa, will benefit to all the aviation stakeholders of the continent, enhancing sustainably the flight safety and efficiency”* Commented Mohamed Moussa, ASECNA General Director.

¹ European Geostationary Navigation Overlay System

About ASECNA

ASECNA is an International public organization. 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 1.850 billion euros in 2020 and has around 7,700 employees in 18 sites in 11 countries across Europe and a plant in the USA.

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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 across West, Central and Southeast Africa, as well as Europe and Asia. The satellite is a hybrid communication satellite with a payload for navigation overlay services (NOS) similar to EGNOS.

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