A monthly round-up of space industry developments for the information of our clients and friends.

Iridium Closes COFACE Financing

On October 28, ***Iridium Communications Inc.*** announced that it successfully closed the ***COFACE***-backed financing facility for its next-generation satellite constellation, ***Iridium NEXT***. A syndicate of nine banks led by ***Deutsche Bank AG***, ***Banco Santander SA***, ***Société Générale***, ***Natixis*** and ***Mediobanca International S.A.***, and including ***BNP Paribas***, ***Crédit Industriel et Commercial***, ***Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A.*** and ***Unicredit Bank Austria AG*** will provide up to $1.8b of financing to Iridium for the design and manufacture of the Iridium NEXT satellites. The facility consists of two pro rata tranches, one of up to $1.537b bearing a fixed interest rate of 4.96% per annum, and the second of up to $263m bearing a variable interest rate based on LIBOR plus 1.95% per annum. The 7-year facility repayment period is expected to begin in 2017 following completion of the Iridium NEXT launch program.

$850m Debt Financing for LightSquared

LightSquared™ Inc. announced on October 3 that it has closed an $850m syndicated secured credit facility arranged and led by ***UBS AG***. The term of the credit facility will be four years, non-callable in the first year. LightSquared will use the proceeds of the financing for general corporate purposes, including constructing its 4G-LTE-wholesale wireless network and accelerating the implementation of its cooperation agreement with ***Inmarsat plc***. LightSquared has to date secured an aggregate of more than $2b in equity, debt and commitments, and has announced the execution of its first customer wholesale agreements.

ABS Orders ABS-2 from SS/L

On October 13, ***Asia Broadcast Satellite*** (ABS) announced that it has selected ***Space Systems/Loral*** (SS/L) to manufacture the ***ABS-2*** satellite. Based on SS/L's ***1300*** platform, ABS-2 will be one of the most powerful commercial satellites launched for service in the Eastern Hemisphere with over 12kW of payload power. The satellite will be equipped with 87 active C-band, Ku-band and Ka-band transponders across 10 different beams to provide a wide range of services including direct-to-home, cable TV distribution, VSAT, data network and telecommunications services to the Middle East, Africa, Asia Pacific and CIS/Russia from the 75°EL orbital location. ABS-2 is scheduled for launch in 2013.

October Launches

On October 14, ***International Launch Services*** successfully placed in orbit the ***XM-5*** satellite for ***SIRIUS XM Radio*** on a ***Proton Breeze M*** launcher from the ***Baikonur Cosmodrome*** in Kazakhstan. Built by ***Space Systems/Loral*** on its ***1300*** platform, XM-5 will be positioned at the 85.2°WL orbital location and will serve as an in-orbit spare for the existing fleet of SIRIUS and XM satellites. On October 19, ***Arianespace S.A.***, ***Starsem*** and their Russian partners, ***Samara Space Center*** (TsSKB-Progress) and ***NPO Lavochkin***, successfully launched the first six ***Globalstar-2*** satellites into their targeted orbit. The launch was performed using a ***Soyuz-Fregat*** launch vehicle from the Baikonur Cosmodrome. Each Globalstar-2 satellite, built by ***Thales Alenia Space***, weighed approximately 650 kg at launch. On October 28, Arianespace announced the launch of the ***BSAT-3b*** satellite for ***Broadcasting Satellite System Corporation*** of Japan and the ***W3B*** satellite for ***Eutelsat Communications S.A.*** using an ***Ariane 5 ECA*** launcher from the ***Guiana Space Center***. BSAT-3b, built by ***Lockheed Martin*** based on its ***A2100A*** platform, is equipped with 12 130W Ku-band channels and will provide direct television broadcast services from the 110°EL orbital location. W3B, which was to be positioned at the 16°EL orbital location, experienced an anomaly with its propulsion system following its launch and has been declared a total loss. Eutelsat has announced that its ***W3C*** satellite, scheduled for launch by mid-2011, now will be positioned at the 16°EL orbital location.

ILS to Launch AsiaSat 7 Satellite in 2011

International Launch Services (ILS) and ***Asia Satellite Telecommunications Co. Ltd.*** announced a contract on October 5 for the launch of the ***AsiaSat 7*** satellite on a ***Proton*** launcher from the ***Baikonur Cosmodrome*** in Kazakhstan in 2011. The satellite, under construction by ***Space Systems/Loral*** based on its ***1300*** platform, will be configured as a replacement for ***AsiaSat 3S***, operating at the 105.5°EL orbital location. Equipped with C-band and Ku-band transponders, AsiaSat 7 will provide fixed satellite services for television broadcast, telephone and VSAT networks for broadband multimedia services across Asia, the Middle East, the CIS and Australasia.