Milbank

# Space Business Review

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

**November 2017**


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## SPIRE RAISES $70M IN SERIES C ROUND

On November 15, Spire Global, Inc. (Spire), a San Francisco-based commercial satellite constellation operator providing advanced maritime, aviation and weather data analytics services, announced that it raised $70m through its Series C investment round, with participation from the Luxembourg Future Fund (LFF) and Promus Ventures, among other new and existing investors. Promus Ventures led Spire's $40m Series B investment round in June 2015; prior to that, Spire raised $25m in July 2014. Spire also announced the opening of a new office in Luxembourg as its European headquarters.

## ORBITAL ORBITS 10 PLANET SATELLITES

On October 31, Orbital ATK, Inc. successfully launched 10 satellites – six SkySats and four Doves – for Planet Labs Inc. (Planet) on a Minotaur-C launch vehicle, marking the first-ever dedicated launch of Planet satellites. Minotaur-C is a redesigned and upgraded version of the Taurus launch vehicle now capable of launching payloads of up to 3,500 lbs. Manufactured by Space Systems Loral, the six SkySats launched October 31 will double Planet's sub-one meter imaging capacity, supplementing the seven SkySats already on orbit.

## GENERAL ATOMICS BUYS SURREY US

On November 13, General Atomics announced that it acquired the majority of the assets of Surrey Satellite Technology US LLC (SST-US), a wholly-owned subsidiary of UK-based Surrey Satellite Technology Ltd. (SSTL) focused on small satellite technologies, systems and services, including the complete design, manufacture, launch and operation of small satellites. The assets will be integrated into General Atomics' Electromagnetic Systems Group to support growth initiatives for development and delivery of small satellite and advanced payload systems.

## VIASAT, ESA PARTNER FOR VIASAT-3

On November 6, ViaSat, Inc. announced a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) valued at €68m between its wholly-owned subsidiary ViaSat Antenna Systems S.A. and the European Space Agency for development, in collaboration with European industry, of fixed and mobile user terminals, ground segment equipment and gateways for the ViaSat-3 satellite communications system. Known as Project AIDAN, the PPP is being funded by Switzerland, the Netherlands, Romania and ViaSat, Inc., along with other members of European industry.

## HUGHES, ONEWEB GROUND CONTRACT

On November 8, Hughes Network Systems, LLC announced that it signed a contract valued at $190m with OneWeb, Ltd. (OneWeb) to provide a ground network system for OneWeb's planned low-Earth-orbit (LEO) satellite constellation, which will provide low-latency, high-speed Internet services worldwide. Building on the system development contract signed by the companies in 2015, the new contract covers the supply of gateway sites equipped with a custom switching complex and multiple satellite access points for high-speed traffic handoff. Deliveries of gateway equipment under the new contract are expected to begin in mid-2018.

## FCC GRANTS ACCESS TO NGSO SYSTEMS

On November 3, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) granted the U.S. market access petitions filed by Space Norway AS for its proposed non-geostationary satellite orbit (NGSO) system, which will provide broadband services to the Arctic region with two satellites in highly-elliptical orbits, and by Telesat Canada (Telesat) for its planned NGSO LEO satellite constellation, which will provide broadband services globally. These decisions mark only the second and third such grants by the FCC; in June, OneWeb Ltd.'s planned LEO constellation became the first NGSO system to receive U.S. market access. In a related development, on November 28, Telesat announced the loss of the first prototype satellite for its planned NGSO system due to the failure of a Russian Soyuz 2 launch vehicle carrying 19 satellites. Per media reports, a malfunction in the vehicle's Fregat upper stage is suspected as the cause of the failure. Among the other 18 satellites included in the mission were satellites for Spire, Astroscale Pte. Ltd. and Astro Digital Inc.

## PROCUREMENT ROUND-UP

**November 16** – The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) selected VOX Space, LLC, a new subsidiary of Virgin Orbit, LLC serving the government national security market, to launch a DoD prototype on the LauncherOne launch vehicle as part of DoD's Space Test Program.
**November 21** – SSTL was selected by UK-based startup Earth-i Ltd. to manufacture the first five satellites for its planned Earth observation constellation. SSTL was also selected by Singapore-based startup Astroscale Pte. Ltd. to supply the satellite and avionics for its first ELSA-d orbital-debris removal mission.