NFIRE Laser Communications Terminal Delivered to MDA

Air Force Lt. General Henry “Trey” Obering, III, Missile Defense Agency (MDA) director, today announced the delivery of the laser communication terminal (LCT) from Tesat-Spacecom to General Dynamics C4 Systems, in Gilbert, Ariz. The LCT will be installed on the Near Field Infrared Experiment (NFIRE) satellite as a secondary payload to evaluate laser communication technology. The primary mission of the NFIRE satellite is to collect images of a boosting rocket to improve understanding of exhaust plume phenomenology and plume-to-rocket body discrimination. The MDA will use this data to validate and update the models and simulations that are fundamental to missile defense applications.

The LCT was developed by Tesat-Spacecom and is provided by the German government as part of a cooperative agreement between the United States and Germany. The goal of this agreement is to conduct communication experiments with the German TerraSAR-X satellite and the German Space Operations Center. These experiments will test low earth orbit satellite-to-satellite and satellite-to-ground capabilities of the terminal.

The NFIRE satellite is expected to be launched on a Minotaur launch vehicle from Wallops Island, Va. in Spring 2007.

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