

PRESS RELEASE

6 March 2025

PR009-2025

Ariane 6 successfully orbits CSO-3 military satellite on first commercial mission

6 March 2025 at 1:24 p.m. local time (4:24 p.m. UTC, 5:24 p.m. CET), Ariane 6, operated by Arianespace, accomplished a flawless launch from Europe's spaceport at the Guiana Space Centre (CSG), orbiting France's CSO-3 optical military observation satellite on behalf of the French defence procurement agency DGA for the Air and Space Force's Space Command (CDE). The launch was the first in 2025 from the CSG and the second for Ariane 6. VA263 marks the first commercial mission for Europe's new launcher, following its successful inaugural flight on 9 July 2024. CSO-3 was placed into Sun-synchronous orbit at an altitude of approximately 800 kilometres.

CSO-3 is the third of three military Earth-observation satellites in the DGA-led MUSIS programme (Multinational Space-based Imaging System). CSO-1 and CSO-2 were launched in 2018 and 2020 respectively. This constellation comprises three optical satellites in different polar orbits designed to fulfil a dual mission: reconnaissance for CSO-1 and CSO-3 from their 800-kilometre station, focused on enhanced coverage, theatre acquisition and revisit capabilities; and identification for CSO-2 from its 480-kilometre perch, providing imagery at extremely high resolution and unsurpassed detail. The satellites' payloads will acquire very-high-resolution imagery in the visible and infrared in a range of viewing modes to serve a broad spectrum of requirements. The sensor is designed to acquire monoscopic (2D) or stereoscopic (3D) imagery, a capability unrivalled in Europe.

DGA delegated oversight to CNES for construction and launch of the CSO satellites, and for the mission ground segment (SSM). CNES is also system co-architect and in charge of launch, in-orbit commissioning and station-keeping operations throughout the satellite's lifetime. DGA and CNES are working closely together as overall architect to ensure consistency across prime contractor activities. As part of an integrated team with DGA and CDE, CNES has been involved in every phase of the project from early-stage studies to final satellite qualification. A consortium formed by Thales Alenia Space and Airbus Defence & Space is the prime contractor for the CSO satellites.

This 263rd launch in the Ariane series marks the second flight for Ariane 6. After its inaugural flight on 9 July 2024, the new modular and versatile heavy-lift launcher has succeeded Ariane 5 and restored Europe's independent access to space, taking European space transportation into a new era.

After the launch, CNES Chairman & CEO Lionel Suchet commented: "Following Ariane 6's successful inaugural flight in July 2024, Europe's space programme is on track with this first commercial mission. I would like to thank our partners at Arianespace, ArianeGroup and ESA, and the Ministry for Armed Forces for putting its faith in CNES, given our agency's role in the CSO mission. This successful launch of the CSO-3 military satellite is a testament to European and French excellence in space. It also underlines CNES's key role in developing military space assets."

Download the CSO-3 launch media reel [here](#)

CONTACTS

Nathalie Blain

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 75 21

nathalie.blain@cnes.fr

Pascale Bresson

Tel. +33 (0)1 44 76 75 39

pascale.bresson@cnes.fr

Raphaël Sart

Tel.: +33 (0)1 44 76 74 51

raphael.sart@cnes.fr