



NEWS RELEASE

# SDA Demonstrates Link 16 in Space With York Space Systems

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York Space Systems announces the first-ever demonstration of Link 16 technology from space on its Tranche 0 (T0) satellites. Photo: York Space Systems

The Space Development Agency (SDA) has successfully demonstrated what it claims is the first-ever Link 16 demonstration in space. The demonstrations took place over the last two weeks with three Tranche 0 Transport Layer satellites provided by York Space Systems, demonstrating network entry through space to ground connection from Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) to a series of receivers using terrestrial radios.

Link 16 is a tactical datalink communication system used by the U.S., NATO, and coalition forces to transmit and exchange real-time situational awareness data.

The SDA said in a Nov. 28 release that operators working with the Agency conducted both passive and active network entry, obtained fine synchronization, and transmitted multiple tactical messages from satellites using L-band radios aboard Tranche 0 Transport Layer satellites to a ground test site located within the territory of a Five Eyes partner nation.

"I can't underscore enough the significance of this technical achievement as we demonstrate the feasibility of the **Proliferated Warfighter Space Architecture** and its ability to deliver space-based capabilities to the warfighter

over existing tactical data links,” said SDA director Derek Tournear. “This is not only the first time Link 16 has been broadcast from space, but the beginning of turning the world’s finest warfighting force into a truly connected beyond line-of-sight joint force.”

The SDA does not have approval from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to broadcast Link 16 from space into U.S. airspace, so SDA received a waiver from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to transmit to a Five Eyes nation. The SDA said this is a “compromise position” and the Agency still has a requirement to test over U.S. air space.

The SDA said this accomplishment is also a “leap ahead” in the Department of Defense-wide Joint All Domain Command and Control (JADC2) effort, connecting available sensors to available warfighting platforms globally. The SDA’s PWSA Transport Layer is the backbone of JADC2 in space.

York Space Systems delivered the satellites used in this demonstration, as part of a contract for nine satellites awarded in August 2020. Eight satellites were **launched in March 2023** by SpaceX, and one was on a **SpaceX launch in September**.

“We are proud to maintain our role as the most agile prime contractor to SDA as it revolutionizes rapid, dedicated space support to the combatant commands by deploying the most innovative solutions of state-of-the-art technology,” said Dirk Wallinger, CEO of York. “This accomplishment not only cements our commitment to advancing space technology but also underscores our dedication to providing cutting-edge solutions for the evolving needs of global security.”

York has a number of SDA contracts and is also developing **42 satellites for SDA’s Tranche 1 Transport Layer; 12 experimental satellites** as part of the Tranche 1 Demonstration and Experimentation System (T1DES) program; and **62 satellites for Tranche 2 Alpha**.