

Consortium to Produce New Digital Maps for French Ministry of Defence



France's IGN has awarded Airbus Defence & Space and Thales the so-called GeoMaps contract to supply the French Ministry of Defence database with digital geographic data on a range of scales, including city maps. They will mainly be based on images acquired by the two Pléiades satellites, significantly increasing the accuracy of the maps to be produced. This contract runs from 2016 to 2021 and guarantees the consistent geometry and formatting of all reference mapping data to optimise interoperability between the French Ministry of Defence's different systems and services, as well as with its allies and partners.

The IGN, acting for the Direction Générale de l'Armement (DGA), the French defence procurement agency, has thus renewed its confidence in this consortium founded more than a decade ago to create TopoBase Défense, which GeoMaps now supersedes. It is one of the main building blocks of the GEODE 4D programme - the four-dimensional defence data (geographical, hydrographic, oceanographic and meteorological) - which integrates all the systems required to keep the French armed forces sufficiently informed of the nature and characteristics of the theatre concerned. In the future, the GeoMaps data will be managed by the GEODE 4D program and disseminated to all the defence systems and in all theatres of operations.

The French military staff will be capable of generating highly value-added data to meet the challenges that defence forces now face: to recall the latest multi-scale geographical data (from national to urban level) and to keep it highly precise and updated regularly to ensure that the information is accurate. The areas to be produced will be defined according to the respective needs of the armed forces.

Vital data

The Thales-Airbus Defence and Space consortium will handle the whole process: from analysing what the military staff need, through running quality control checks on the products supplied. This also includes managing specifications, defining the production framework (procedures, tools, controls) and is based on a large network of SMEs to ensure that all of the data is consistent and homogeneous.

Bernhard Brenner, head of the intelligence business cluster at Airbus Defence and Space stated this really recognises the teams' expertise and the know-how of the French SMEs. The accuracy of the data they provide is vital if the operations which French armed forces are involved in and the fight against terrorism in particular will succeed, he added.

Jean-Michel Lagarde, deputy general manager, of the secure communications and information systems department, said with GeoMaps, the consortium stands behind the military and security industry, with support in theatres of operations, providing them with high added-value data to meet their varying operational constraints and conducting operations with intelligence systems. In an age of asymmetrical conflicts, being able to rely on highly precise geographical data gives them a real technical advantage on the ground.