



**THE HON. JOEL FITZGIBBON MP**  
**Minister for Defence**

Saturday, 2 May 2009

**ENHANCED UHF SATELLITE COMMUNICATIONS FOR  
DEPLOYED FORCES**

The Minister for Defence, the Hon. Joel Fitzgibbon MP, today announced that the Government has signed a \$US167 million contract with Intelsat for the provision of satellite communications payload over the Indian Ocean as part of the new Defence White Paper.

Mr Fitzgibbon said the satellite will enhance ultra high frequency (UHF) communications as part of the Government's focus on improving connectivity for our deployed forces and assets operating in the Indian Ocean region. The UHF band is widely used for military satellite communications because of its adaptability to small, mobile terminals used by ground, sea and air forces.

"The purchase will substantially enhance the tactical communications needed by Australia's forces on distant deployments including the Middle East and Afghanistan. This represents a critical capability for our forces and addresses a potential capability gap when the current LEASAT 5 satellite reaches the end of its life and the lease for payload on the SKYNET 5B satellite ends in 2011," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

Defence will place its communications payload into the satellite which is being launched to meet commercial telecommunications requirements. Compared to launching its own satellite Defence will save over \$150m through this initiative and is a good example of the types of reforms required to ensure the most efficient use of Government finances.

"The contract leverages an opportunity for Defence to share a commercial satellite at significant cost and schedule savings compared to a dedicated satellite. It will also complement the satellite communications provided by the approved Wideband Global System for allied fixed sites and maritime platforms," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

The White Paper has also provided guidance for Defence to explore options to extend UHF coverage throughout the Pacific Ocean region. The IS-22 satellite is due for launch in 2012 and Intelsat has been contracted to operate the satellite for 15 years after launch.

"This new satellite communications capability vastly increases the capability available to our deployed forces and is part of the overall Government

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intention to strengthen and reform the Defence information environment,” Mr Fitzgibbon concluded.

The 2009 Defence White Paper represents the most comprehensive statement on Defence ever produced. It affirms the Government’s commitment to the defence of Australia, the protection of our sovereign interests and the security and stability of our region.

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