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The Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation

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PHASE 3-D SLATED FOR LAUNCH IN APRIL 1997 ON ARIANE 502

In a published report released Thursday September 26 by the European Space Agency (ESA), Mr. Jean-Marie Luton, Director General of ESA, and Mr. Alain Bensoussan, Chairman of CNES (the French Space Agency) announced that the launch of Ariane 502 has now been tentatively set for mid-April, 1997. It was also confirmed that the Phase 3-D International Amateur Radio Satellite will be on this flight. The other payloads are to be a pair of technological measurement packages for validation of the launch vehicle's ability to place two satellites into a geostationary transfer orbit (GTO).

These announcements came during a joint ESA-CNES press conference at ESA Headquarters in Paris called to outline the respective plans of the two agencies to correct identified deficiencies in the Ariane 5 launch vehicle. The actions are in direct response to a comprehensive report submitted in July by the Ariane 501 Inquiry Board that was chartered to investigate the loss on launch of the first Ariane 5 booster in early June.

During the press conference, it was also reported that ESA's Atmospheric Reentry Demonstrator (ARD), a technology demonstration capsule for a future European manned space transport vehicle, along with an as yet unspecified commercial payload, is to be flown on a subsequent Ariane 5 vehicle, Ariane 503, which has been made a part of the Ariane-5 qualification process. This flight could take place in September 1997. The ARD had earlier been slated to fly on Ariane 502 along with the AMSAT Phase 3-D satellite.

In today's announcement, Mr. Luton and Mr. Bensoussan outlined several specific actions that are now being taken by ESA and CNES to assure the correction of software contained in the Ariane 5 inertial reference system. Errors in this software were previously reported by ESA as being one of the primary causes of the Ariane 501 failure. Corrective actions include making changes to the Ariane 5 Functional Simulation Facility to make the qualification tests more representative of the flight environment, as well as performing a comprehensive review of all the embedded software contained in the launch vehicle.

ESA and CNES also announced that the industrial architect on the Ariane project will henceforth assume the role of "software architect". This change will allow not only for verification of all software incorporated in equipment but also will help insure the overall functional integrity of the launcher. Mr. Luton and Mr. Bensoussan went on to note that this means that all of the launch vehicle's software will now become subject to qualification reviews in which outside experts will take part.

In addition, the joint ESA and CNES announcement reported that working methods used in the Launcher Qualification Review have now been modified to introduce specialized audits on the most complex launcher systems in order to provide closer analysis wherever this is deemed necessary. A comprehensive review of the launcher's qualification is now also reported to be underway along with systematic efforts to identify "degraded" modes of operation that could affect launcher elements.

AMSAT is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization that was first chartered in Washington, DC, USA. Its objectives include promoting space research and communication by building, launching and controlling Amateur Radio spacecraft. Since its founding, over 25 years ago, many other like-minded organizations have been formed around the world to pursue the same goals and who now also share the AMSAT name. Often acting together, these groups have used predominantly volunteer labor and donated resources to design, construct and, with the added assistance of government and commercial space agencies, successfully launch, over two dozen Amateur Radio communications satellites into Earth orbit.

The Phase 3-D satellite, now under construction with the help of over a dozen AMSAT groups on five continents, will be the largest, most complex, and most expensive Amateur Radio satellite ever built.

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