

Air Force Officials Continue Plans to Modernize GPS

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SCHRIEVER AIR FORCE BASE, CO (AFNS) -- Through the years, the Global Positioning System has become one of the most widely-used Air Force applications.

Today GPS is used in everything from farming and aviation to public safety, disaster relief and recreation, not to mention its military purpose of providing precision navigation and timing to combat forces.

This dependence requires a keen focus on maintaining and modernizing the system. Air Force officials took the next step in that process when they awarded a contract last month to Raytheon Company for the Next Generation GPS Control Segment, commonly referred to as OCX.

"OCX is the new ground system that will replace our current Architecture Evolution Plan ground system," said Lt. Col. Deanna Burt, 2nd Space Operations Squadron commander. "OCX is critical for us as we cannot fly GPS III satellites with our current ground system."

The OCX development contract is set to last 73 months with option years for sustainment worth about \$1.5 billion. The contract will include development and installation of hardware and software at GPS control stations here and at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., deployment of advanced monitor stations at remote sites and initial contractor support with sustainment options for five years.

"The new OCX ground system will bring more automation and combine AEP and our Launch Anomaly and Disposal Operations system into one ground system eliminating the need for dual certifications," Colonel Burt said.

The new ground system also will allow for command and control of an additional number of satellites.

"OCX is also meant to fly up to 64 satellites where our current AEP system can only fly up to 32 satellites," she said.

This modernization doesn't leave the legacy GPS birds flying solo. OCX will maintain backwards compatibility with the Block IIR and IIR-M constellation, provide command and control of the new GPS IIF and GPS III families of satellites, and enable new modernized signal capabilities.

"OCX is urgently needed not only to enable new warfighter capabilities but also to put the new GPS III space vehicles into mission operations," said Col. Dave Madden, GPS Wing commander at Los Angeles AFB, Calif. "OCX will have a flexible architecture that can rapidly adapt to the changing needs of today's warfighter and will connect to the Global Information Grid so that warfighters around the globe have immediate access to GPS data and constellation status."

(Staff members from Space and Missile Systems Center Public Affairs contributed to this article.)

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