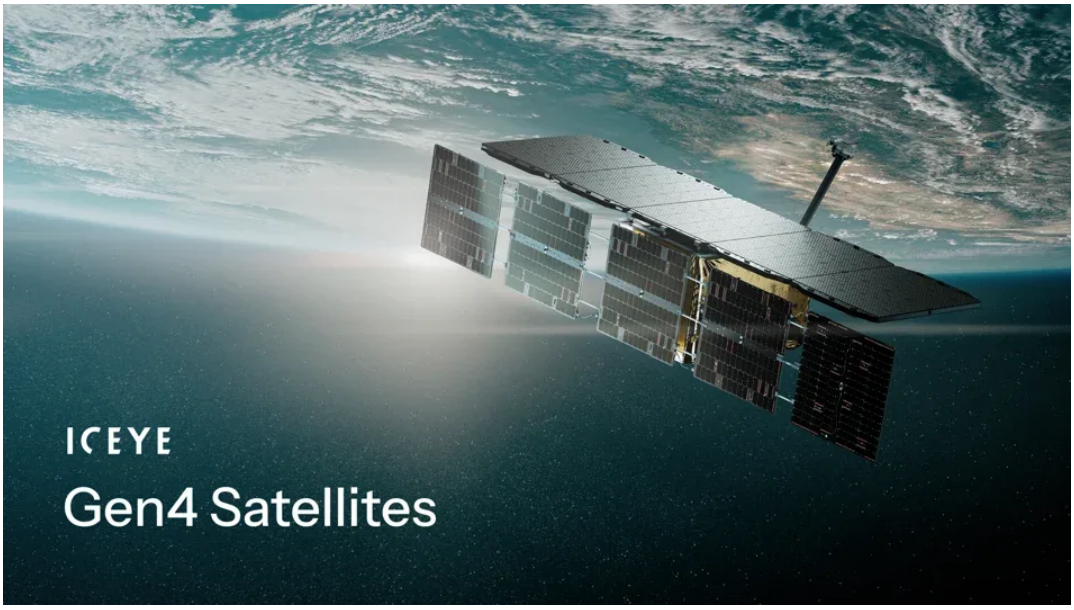

Poland develops sovereign military satellite system with ICEYE

Warsaw and the Finnish company will work on the new MILSATCOM by 2030 to reduce dependence on external networks

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Poland is launching an ambitious project to equip itself with a satellite communications system entirely under national control. Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa (PGZ), the main state-owned Polish defense group, and Finnish ICEYE, specialized in synthetic aperture radar satellites, signed a letter of intent during the MSPO defense exhibition in Kielce to develop a dedicated MILSATCOM network for the Polish Armed Forces. The objective is to create a sovereign satellite infrastructure, conceptually modeled on Starlink but operated directly by Warsaw.

Political weight to the initiative was given directly by Prime Minister Donald Tusk, who during the MSPO described the result as a "Polish Starlink". The project stems from lessons learned from the war in Ukraine, where satellite communications proved to be fundamental for maintaining connectivity of command centers, operational units, sensors and drones even when

terrestrial infrastructure had been compromised. For Warsaw the priority is to reduce dependence on external satellite services and acquire a capability that can be controlled directly by the State.

According to plans communicated by PGZ, the program should run between 2026 and 2030. The new architecture will include ground infrastructure built in Poland, national industrial capacities for system production and maintenance, and facilities dedicated to network control and management. The choice of a distributed configuration is particularly significant: a constellation of multiple satellites is indeed more resilient than an architecture based on a few large platforms, especially in a scenario where space infrastructure could become targets of electronic warfare, cyberattacks or anti-satellite operations.

Roles and expertise in the partnership

In the project the two groups will have distinct responsibilities. ICEYE will act as the technical partner responsible for developing the satellite architecture, designing and producing space platforms and orbital operations. PGZ must instead organize the national industrial component, identifying group companies capable of contributing through production capabilities, infrastructure and technical expertise. The program therefore aims not only at realizing the system, but at building a military space industrial supply chain in Poland.

The collaboration between PGZ and ICEYE does not start from scratch. The two companies are already working together on the MikroSAR program, through which Poland has acquired SAR radar satellites destined for its Armed Forces. According to the Polish government, by the end of 2026 the Armed Forces should be able to count on a total of nine satellites to strengthen intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. The new communications system would represent a further step: not only to observe from space, but to use space to guarantee continuous and protected military connectivity.

A Progressive Space Strategy

Warsaw is progressively building a military space infrastructure composed of different but complementary capabilities. SAR satellites make it possible to identify and track what happens on the ground. A MILSATCOM network, on the other hand, should enable the information

collected to be transmitted quickly to command centers and operational units. In a modern combat system, the value of a sensor increasingly depends on the ability to transfer data in real time to those who need to use it.

The reference to Starlink is not accidental. In the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, satellite communications have played a fundamental role in ensuring connectivity to units on the ground even when traditional networks had been destroyed or made unavailable. The proliferation of drones has further increased this need. Reconnaissance, target acquisition, command and control, image transmission, and unit coordination require networks capable of operating continuously even in conditions of heavy electronic warfare. Poland appears to be directly applying one of the main lessons that emerged from the conflict: communications are no longer merely a support element, but a decisive operational capability.

The most relevant aspect of the program remains that of sovereignty. Poland already uses international satellite services and will likely continue to do so, but building its own network would allow the Armed Forces to have an independent capability, controlled directly by national authorities. It means being able to autonomously decide priorities, service levels, communications security, and future network development. Warsaw does not simply want to purchase a satellite service: it wants to acquire the industrial and technological expertise necessary to build, manage, and update it independently.

The program confirms the speed at which Poland is expanding its military capabilities. Alongside major terrestrial programs and air force modernization, Warsaw is increasingly investing in the space domain, now considered an integral part of military operations. If the project is completed according to plan, by the end of the decade Poland could have its own satellite infrastructure capable of ensuring resilient, independent communications controlled by the Armed Forces, demonstrating how much space has become one of the fundamental domains of European defense.

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