NCIA Pre-competitive Engagement Calling Notice
Request for Information (RFI)

NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA)

NEXT GENERATION SATCOM
CAPABILITY PROGRAMME PACKAGE (CPP)

RFI-42634128-SATCOM

NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA)

NCIA/ACQ/2026/16886
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NCIA Pre-competitive Engagement Calling Notice - Request for Information (RFI)

To: Industry Partners

1. The NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA) is conducting pre-competitive market engagement as market research to gather input on potential solutions to support the upcoming acquisition for next generation SATCOM services and systems. To that end, we are issuing the attached Request for Information (RFI) **RFI-42634128-SATCOM** and holding a dedicated workshop at NATO Edge to solicit feedback from capable and interested industry partners.

2. This Calling Notice RFI is issued for planning purposes only and is not a request for bids. It is part of NCIA's effort to engage early to inform and ensure it has a clear understanding of the marketplace, available capabilities, and potential acquisition strategies.

3. We value your insight and invite you to review and comment on our draft high level problem statement (Annexes A and B) with a view in providing recommendations for improving performance outcomes, competition, and efficiency; and identifying any risks or concerns that should be considered during planning.

4. Feedback can be provided in writing in accordance with submission instructions and/or by attending a dedicated industry engagement – **SATCOM Workshop at NATO Edge**, taking place on 17-19 November in Izmir (Türkiye), where NCIA will respond to clarifying questions and invite comments from participants.

5. Submission instructions and additional details can be found in the enclosure to this RFI.

6. Only companies from a NATO member country can participate in or respond to this RFI (https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/nato_countries.htm) or attend a dedicated workshop.

7. Should you have any questions or need clarification, please contact Irina Barabancea at RFI-42634128-SATCOM@ncia.nato.int

8. We thank you in advance for your time and input, and we look forward to engaging with you as we shape this potential acquisition.

For the Chief of Acquisition:
Irina Barabancea
Digitally signed by Irina Barabancea
Date: 2026.11.06 15:49:06 +01'00'

Irina Barabancea
Contracting Officer

Enclosure:
- Request for Information with Annexes A and B
- Distribution List

NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA)

Distribution List

1. **NATO Delegation (Attn: Infrastructure Adviser)**

1. Albania	**12.** Greece	**23.** Poland
2. Belgium	**13.** Hungary	**24.** Portugal
3. Bulgaria	**14.** Iceland	**25.** Romania
4. Canada	**15.** Italy	**26.** Slovakia
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6. Czechia	**17.** Lithuania	**28.** Spain
7. Denmark	**18.** Luxembourg	**29.** Sweden
8. Estonia	**19.** Montenegro	**30.** Türkiye
9. Finland	**20.** Netherlands	**31.** United Kingdom
10. France	**21.** North Macedonia	**32.** United States
11. Germany	**22.** Norway	

2. **All NATEXs**

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NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA)

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

A. Introduction

1. The NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA) is conducting pre-competitive market engagement as market research to gather input on potential solutions to support the upcoming acquisition for next generation SATCOM services and systems. To that end, we are issuing the attached Request for Information (RFI) **RFI-42634128-SATCOM** and holding a dedicated workshop at NATO Edge to solicit feedback from capable and interested industry partners.

2. This Calling Notice RFI is issued for planning purposes only and is not a request for bids. It is part of NCIA's effort to engage early to inform and ensure it has a clear understanding of the marketplace, available capabilities, and potential acquisition strategies.

B. Submission Instructions

1. Interested parties are invited to respond in accordance with the instructions below or provide feedback during Industry Engagement:

   a. Submit responses via the email address in section F no later than **12:00 hours Central European Time (CET)** on **03 December 2026**.

   b. Responses should be submitted in PDF or Word format and must not exceed **40 pages**, including:
      i. Responses to Annex A and comments on Annex B excluding:
         i. Cover page
         ii. Company brochures or product literature (if included)
         iii. Attachments such as past performance references

   c. Use the following subject line for submission
      i. "Response to RFI RFI-42634128-SATCOM – [Company Name]"

   d. All responses should address the items listed in Annex A – Requested Information.

   e. Respondents are also encouraged to review and comment on the draft problem statement in Annex B .

C. Industry Engagement

1. Planned industry engagement will take place in the form of SATCOM Workshop at NATO Edge, taking place on 17-19 November in Izmir (Türkiye).
2. During the workshop NCIA will brief the high-level problem statement and the user story (Annex B), respond to clarifying questions and invite comments from participants, based on the questions shared (Annex B) in the open forum as well as in bilateral meetings (schedule allowing).
3. More information on NATO Edge attendance and registration is available on event's official website - https://www.natoedge.nato.int/ .

D. Disclaimer

1. This RFI is for planning and informational purposes only and shall not be construed as a solicitation or obligation on the part of the NCIA. The NCIA does not intend to award a contract based on responses to this RFI. Respondents are solely responsible for all costs incurred in responding to this RFI. The NCIA will consider and analyse all information received from this RFI and may use these findings to develop a future solicitation. The NCIA will consider all responses as confidential commercial information and will protect it as such.

2. NCIA reserves the right, at any time, to cancel this informal market survey, partially or in its entirety. No legal liability on the part of NCIA for payment of any sort shall arise and in no event will a cause of action lie with any prospective participant for the recovery of any costs incurred in connection with the preparation of documentation or participation in response hereto. All effort initiated or undertaken by prospective informal market survey participants shall be done considering and accepting this fact.

E. Use of Information Provided through Responses

1. **Confidentiality of Responses**

The NCIA may incorporate industry comments and responses, in part or in whole, into a future release of a solicitation. Should respondents include proprietary data in their responses that they do not wish to be disclosed to the public for any purpose, or used by NCIA (except for internal evaluation purposes), they must:

a. **Mark the title page with the following legend:**

This document includes data that shall not be disclosed outside NATO and shall not be duplicated, used, or disclosed – in whole or in part – for any purpose other than for NCIA internal evaluation purposes, unless otherwise expressly authorised by [insert company name]. This restriction does not limit the NCIA's right to use information contained in this data without restriction if it is obtained from another source. The data subject to this restriction are contained in sheets [insert numbers or other identification of sheets]

b. **Mark each sheet of data it wishes to restrict with the following legend:**

Use or disclosure of data contained on this sheet is subject to the restriction on the title page of this document.

F. RFI Point of Contact

1. Irina Barabancea

2. RFI-42634128-SATCOM@ncia.nato.int

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Annex A – Requested Information

1. Respondents are encouraged to provide the following information in their response:

   a. **Company Information**
      i. Legal Business Name
      ii. Address
      iii. Website
      iv. Primary Point of Contact
      v. Email address

   b. **Technical Capability and Relevant Experience**
   Provide a concise description of the organisation's potential contribution to next generation SATCOM: space segment and capacity (GEO, MEO, LEO, HEO), ground segment, terminals and user equipment, network and service management, security and key management, integration, and managed services.
      i. Summary of relevant capabilities. Identify the organisation's role in the SATCOM value chain, and map the offering to the capability coverage areas in Annex B. Specialist responses addressing only part of the scope are welcome.
      ii. Summary of relevant past performance considering the details included in Annex B. Clearly distinguish deployed capabilities from prototypes, proposed developments and capabilities dependent on third-party suppliers.
      iii. Any experience in delivering SATCOM services to NATO, National Defence or government customers?

   c. **Feedback and Recommendations**
      i. Responses to the RFI Questions provided in Annex B
      ii. Comments on the proposed background, scope and objectives.
      iii. Recommended innovations, alternative approaches and opportunities for reuse.
      iv. Proposed delivery increments and key customer dependencies.
      v. Recommendations for improving competition, integration and operational adoption.
      vi. Comments on the draft Problem Statement
   Use quantitative evidence where available. Where estimates are necessary, state the assumptions, range and basis of calculation. Identify information that would be needed to provide a more reliable assessment.
   Commercial estimates should be non-binding and distinguish space segment and capacity charges from terminal, ground segment, integration, support, licensing and continuity costs.

   d. **Questions or Concerns**
      i. Significant technical, commercial, security, legal and delivery risks, together with proposed mitigations.
      ii. Dependencies on proprietary components, third-party constellations and ground infrastructure, spectrum rights, launch services, export-controlled technologies, specialist personnel or other constrained resources.
      iii. Suggestions for enhancing competition
   Supporting material may include product descriptions, interface documentation, demonstration results and relevant project references. Identify proprietary information in accordance with the calling notice (section E) and comply with its submission, length and information-handling instructions. Responses should not contain classified or otherwise unauthorised information.

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Annex B – Problem statement

Note: This is a DRAFT and subject to change. The NCIA is seeking industry feedback.

Consultation status: This Annex presents the proposed operational need and areas for Industry feedback. It does not establish a final specification, contract structure, purchase quantity, funding or schedule, or a commitment to acquire every capability described.

1. Background

The NATO Communications and Information Agency (NCIA) requires an integrated, secure and resilient SATCOM capability that allows NATO forces to communicate and exchange information across the Allied nations at all times and under all circumstances, by bringing military and commercial satellite communications together as one integrated service. This capability supports the NCIA's mission to deliver interoperable communications and information services that connect NATO and Allied forces, strengthen informed decision-making, and enable effective planning and execution of operations across Multi-Domain Operations (MDO).
NATO forces depend on connectivity to share data across domains, and that connectivity is contested. Fixed headquarters, deployed and forward forces rely on terrestrial links that can be degraded or compromised, while ships and aircraft have limited or no access to fixed infrastructure. Threats include interference, cyber compromise of ground and user segments, damage to gateways and ground infrastructure, and restriction of service by a provider or a national authority.

NATO's public Demand Signal[1] highlights the need for EW-resistant communications, real-time command, control and communications, and operations in a denied or degraded electromagnetic spectrum across its priority capability areas. SATCOM is a key enabler of all of them. NATO is moving towards a layered communications architecture in which SATCOM is expected to play a significant role, not just a fallback. Commercial SATCOM is expected to carry a growing share of NATO SATCOM traffic, while military SATCOM remains essential where NATO needs assured access. NATO therefore follows a two-speed approach: commercial services adopted quickly where they meet requirements, military capability retained where assurance is indispensable, and both joined through open interfaces into one interoperable architecture that delivers one integrated service.

The operational challenge is therefore broader than acquiring more capacity. NATO must be able to integrate military and commercial SATCOM across orbits, bands and providers; keep the service available and secure even under contest; retain control of its security and sovereignty; and have end-to-end visibility of it, without depending on a single vendor, orbit or frequency band.

Existing capability foundation

Today, NATO's core military SATCOM capacity is provided by Allies from their national military satellite systems under the NATO SATCOM Services 6th Generation (NSS6G) Memorandum of Understanding, which runs from January 2020 until the end of 2034. NATO-operated satellite ground stations and commercially procured augmentation services complement it. For commercial SATCOM services, there is an ongoing procurement to have framework contracts under Augmentation SATCOM Services Project (i.e. Project 7). This engagement seeks to understand complementary capabilities, integration and future growth around that foundation.

[1] https://www.nato.int/en/work-with-us/business-and-project-opportunities/demand-signal

2. Scope

The Contractor shall provide secure, resilient and interoperable SATCOM services, systems, software and integration support that enable assured NATO connectivity across military and commercial SATCOM, covering the space, ground and user segments, the end-to-end management of the integrated service, and the training, maintenance and support necessary for sustained operational use, including, but not limited to the following capability coverage areas:

a. Capacity and services: commercial SATCOM capacity and managed services across GEO, MEO, LEO and HEO orbits with committed service levels, and integration of military SATCOM (UHF, X band, military Ka band) into the same architecture.
b. Terminals and user segment: fixed, vehicle, maritime, airborne and manpack terminals, including multi-orbit, multi-band terminals able to switch between military and commercial constellations.
c. Ground segment: gateways and teleports, and digitised and virtualised ground segments based on open interfaces (e.g. DIFI), enabling dynamic anchoring and re-routing of traffic.
d. Integrated service management: Automated or AI enabled end-to-end monitoring, control and orchestration across orbits, bands and providers, through open APIs, connected to NATO management systems.
e. Security and sovereignty: NATO-controlled key management, accredited services, cleared personnel where the security level requires it, and in-region gateways and traffic routing where needed.
f. Resilience and assured access: priority access, surge and restoration, and resilience to disruption: interference, cyber compromise, loss of ground infrastructure and denial of service.
g. Automation: AI/ML-assisted operations, such as interference detection, path selection and capacity allocation, with human oversight, within accredited NATO environments.
h. Lifecycle: integration, accreditation support, training, operational support, and technology refresh over the service period (new orbits, terminals and waveforms).

These capabilities support authorised NATO users and do not imply changes to national ownership of military SATCOM or commercial space systems.

The areas overlap: respondents should identify reusable components and shared dependencies rather than assume separate acquisition for each area.

Scope boundaries. This RFI:

a. Does not select a service model: on-demand leasing, reserved capacity, NATO-owned capacity on commercial satellites and fully managed services are all being considered.
b. Does not prescribe a single prime contractor, contract structure or duration.
c. Does not presume that a commercial service is accredited or suitable for NATO merely because it is operational elsewhere.
d. Does not assume that a commercial service can provide assured access by contract alone.
e. Does not equate a large number of providers with assured availability.
f. Does not reopen projects/procurements already in delivery or at invitation-for-bid stage.
g. Does not establish numerical acceptance thresholds.

3. Objectives

The intended capability should provide NATO with SATCOM that is:

- **a.** Integrated: use military and commercial SATCOM as one integrated service across orbits, bands and providers.
- **b.** Ready and available: committed availability and rates, rapid activation, surge and restoration, so that connectivity is there when it is needed.
- **c.** Secure and sovereign: NATO-controlled key management and accredited services, with cleared personnel where the security level requires it.
- **d.** Open and interoperable: documented interfaces, virtualised ground segments and integration with NATO systems, so that services can be provisioned, monitored and re-routed without bespoke engineering.
- **e.** Resilient: diversity of orbits, bands and providers, so that no single orbit, band or provider is a single point of failure, with tested continuity and recovery arrangements.
- **f.** Competitive and sustainable: participation of specialist suppliers and new entrants, transparent costs and manageable supplier transitions, with technology refresh over the service period.
- **g.** Demonstrated incrementally: operational scenarios, measurable performance and user feedback guide each delivery increment.

Industry is invited to recommend realistic targets, test methods and trade-offs.

The engagement should ultimately help NATO design its next generation SATCOM systems with practical delivery increments that connect commercial innovation to operational needs without prescribing a narrow technical solution.

4. Illustrative User Story

During a NATO operation, a forward headquarters (deployed) with several hundred users depends on military and commercial SATCOM services in its area. The commercial link is lost. Possible causes include interference, a gateway outage, or throttling or restriction of the service by the operator or a national authority. At the same time, demand for capacity grows as additional forces arrive. The communications and information services team needs to:

1. Detect the loss, identify the affected users and missions, and establish the immediate connectivity needs.
2. Restore command and control rapidly over an independent path, not sharing the same operator, gateway or jurisdiction as the failed link.
3. Obtain additional capacity in a defined area at short notice, and release it when it is no longer needed.
4. Move traffic between commercial and military SATCOM, and between orbits and providers, without losing the mission, with a single view of service status.
5. Keep NATO key management, accreditation and personnel clearance rules in force on every path used.
6. Record service performance and events for assessment, reporting and subsequent improvement.

The workflow should remain useful if a provider becomes unavailable or restricts the service, communications are constrained, or some information cannot be released to every participant.

The desired result is that command and control is maintained, capacity can support the mission, and NATO pays for use rather than idle capacity, without depending on any single operator, orbit or authority.

QUESTIONS FOR INDUSTRY

Respondents should answer only the questions relevant to their offering. Responses should distinguish existing capability from planned development, and identify supporting evidence, assumptions and dependencies.

A. TECHNICAL FEASIBILITY QUESTIONS

T1. For each commercial SATCOM service you offer in various orbits (GEO, MEO, LEO, HEO), what service levels (availability, committed information rate, restoration time) can you realistically commit to, including in degraded and contested conditions, and where does that commitment structurally break? What are the risks that can impact the sovereignty of the services provided?

T2. When do you expect field-deployable multi-orbit, multi-band terminals (manpack, vehicle, maritime, airborne) that are able to switch between LEO and GEO, military and commercial, to be widely available? What is the main blocker today: antenna technology, modem/waveform interoperability, crypto/TRANSEC integration, certification or cost?

T3. What is your view on digitised and virtualised ground segments (e.g. DIFI) for dynamic anchoring (changing the gateway at which traffic enters the network) and re-routing, and what should NATO standardise first? What benefits, if any, would digitising interfaces and virtualising functions within end-user SATCOM terminals provide?

T4. Where does AI/ML deliver measurable gains in SATCOM today (integrating management of Military and Commercial SATCOM, dynamic capacity and beam allocation, multi-orbit path selection, multi-waveform, interference detection and geolocation, cyber anomaly detection, predictive maintenance)? What is deliverable today vs. in ~24 months, what operational evidence can you share, and what data and access would your models need inside an accredited NATO environment? How would NATO information be protected from unauthorised reuse, including for model training or improvement?

T5. Beyond interference, how do you protect space, ground and user segments against cyber threats, interception or spoofing of command (TT&C) links or GNSS signals, threats to satellites in orbit, and disruption of gateways and teleports? Which of these challenges is the most difficult/costly to mitigate on a commercial basis? Can you share any lessons learned? Responses should not contain classified or otherwise unauthorised information.

T6. Proliferated LEO constellations bring diversity but may be exposed to specific counter-space effects (e.g. debris events including chain events like Kessler Syndrome, or a high-altitude nuclear detonation,). What mix of orbits, terrestrial and airborne (e.g. High-Altitude Platforms) layers would you recommend for a resilient NATO architecture, and why?

T7. When will optical (laser) satellite-to-ground links be operationally usable for NATO, and for which use cases (feeder links, strategic backhaul, low-probability-of-intercept tactical links)? How should availability be assured given weather and site diversity?

T8. What role can 3GPP non-terrestrial networks (5G, and future 6G, via satellite) and direct-to-device (D2D) services play in tactical communications, and what limitations must be solved first (security, spectrum etc.)?

T9. What can the industry propose to protect the assured access to UHF, X band, military Ka band and commercial-band SATCOM services against orbital and spectrum congestion and against possible changes to geostationary/non-geostationary (GSO/NGSO) sharing rules at the ITU World Radiocommunication Conference 2027 (WRC-27)?

B. CONTRACTUAL & COMMERCIAL QUESTIONS

C1. In a crisis scenario, what contractual, technical and governance mechanisms can guarantee NATO priority access and prevent unilateral throttling, geographic restriction or service denial, whether decided by the operator or by a national authority? Which of these would you commit to in a contract? Which assurances cannot be provided by contract alone?

C2. NATO is considering service models ranging from on-demand leasing and reserved capacity to NATO-owned capacity on commercial satellites, and fully managed end-to-end services. Which models can you offer, how would pricing differ, and what minimum commitment and duration does each need for you to invest?

C3. How can national or NATO sovereignty needs (in-region gateways, traffic routing, operations by cleared nationals, NATO key management) be delivered within a commercial constellation, and at what cost premium compared with standard service?

C4. How quickly could you provide additional capacity in a defined area, and how does this change with the size of the surge? How would you price surge against baseline so that NATO does not pay for idle capacity?

C5. If supporting NATO exposes your satellites or ground infrastructure to additional risk (such as the challenges in question T5), what risk mitigation would you propose (insurance, indemnity, reconstitution or replacement guarantees)?

C6. Over the service period, how do you keep the service current (inserting new orbits, terminals, waveforms, AI tools and new entrants) without re-competition or re-accreditation? How exposed is your roadmap to launch availability and supply-chain constraints?

C7. Does a pre-competed framework with a service catalogue and as-needed call-offs help or hinder you compared with fewer, larger contracts? What alternative structure would make it work?

C8. Would you bid as prime or multi-source service integrator across operators, orbits and terminals, or only as a capacity or equipment provider? If only as a subcontractor or consortium member, what specifically blocks prime participation?

C9. NATO is considering different service management models (NATO, the integrator, or individual operators). Which of these could you work with, and what would each need to work in practice? What data, APIs and control would you expose to enable end-to-end visibility across military and commercial SATCOM?

C10. Which of NATO's likely requirements (e.g., non-contended committed rates, very high availability, cleared personnel, NATO security accreditation, global coverage) would drive cost or limit competition, and what would you change?

C11. What could NATO improve (e.g. people, processes, accreditation timelines, culture and commercial terms) to be a partner you can deliver resilient SATCOM with, and where do government customers most often fall short?