



AS IT IS

SpaceX to Build Missile-Tracking Satellites

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SpaceX has been chosen by the U.S. Defense Department to build missile-**tracking** satellites.

The \$149 million contract, or legal agreement, was announced by the U.S. Space Development Agency (SDA) this week. The SDA is an agency under the Department of Defense.

It is the first time SpaceX has won a government contract to build satellites. The American aerospace company is best known for its rockets.

In May, SpaceX made history by launching two astronauts into space aboard a rocket and spacecraft the company built and operated for NASA.

SpaceX has increased its satellite production in recent years for its Starlink network. Starlink is a group of satellites - deployed to low-Earth orbit - designed to send internet signals across the world.

SpaceX chief Elon Musk has said he hopes Starlink will make enough money to help pay for the company's space travel goals.

Under the contract, SpaceX will use its Starlink plant in Redmond, Washington, to build four satellites. The satellites will have a special missile-tracking **sensor** supplied by another company, an SDA official said.

The SDA also awarded a \$193 million contract to technology company L3 Harris Technologies Inc. to build four additional satellites.

Both companies are expected to have the satellites ready for launch by fall 2022.

The awards represent the start of SDA's plan to develop a system of satellites in low-Earth orbit to **detect** and follow missiles, such as intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). ICBMs can travel long distances and are difficult to follow and intercept, or stop.

In 2019, SpaceX won a \$28 million contract from the U.S. Air Force. The contract permits the Air Force to use the Starlink satellite network to test **encrypted** internet services on military planes.

The Air Force has not ordered any Starlink satellites of its own.

I'm John Russell.

Joey Roulette reported on this story for Reuters. John Russell adapted it for Learning English. Bryan Lynn was the editor.

Words in This Story

track – *v.* record the progress or development of something over time

sensor – *n.* a device that detects or senses heat, light, sound, motion, etc., and then reacts to it in a particular way

detect – *v.* discover or notice something

encrypt – *v.* to change (information) from one form to another especially to hide its meaning

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