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## Recently Launched Morelos Satellite to Provide Broad Telecommunications Coverage in Mexico

by Carlos Navarro

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In early October, the Mexican government launched its state-of-the-art Morelos 3 satellite, a unit that will greatly expand and enhance telecommunications in Mexico. The satellite, launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida, will broadcast on the L band, an optimal radio frequency that allows communication through satellite mobile devices between people and terrestrial, seafaring, and airborne vehicles, even in adverse weather conditions. Morelos 3 also gives government entities in Mexico the ability to engage in secure and uninterrupted communications in times of emergencies and natural disasters.

Morelos 3 is part of the MexSAT satellite system, joining the Bicentenario satellite in offering telecommunications services to the Mexican territory. Morelos 3 will provide service to mobile devices, as opposed to Bicentenario, which offers connections to 5,000 fixed locations.

"The success of the mission is great news for Mexico," said Mexsat director Omar Charfén. "Now we can begin to use Morelos 3 to expand the already robust communications services provided by MexSAT."

Authorities believe the new communications system will improve the government's response during hurricanes, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. The system was not yet operable when Hurricane Patricia slammed into western Mexico on Oct. 23. The satellite reached its orbit in mid-October, and tests were scheduled for a 16-day period beginning Oct. 21.

The Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Transportes (SCT) said a major feature of Morelos 3 is the expansion of service to isolated communities. "[This satellite] will provide the best satellite coverage to those Mexicans living in remote areas, where conventional means of communication haven't yet reached yet," said Communications and Transportation Secretary Gerardo Ruiz Esparza.

"We are going to have a splendid platform throughout the country," Javier Mendieta, director of the Agencia Espacial Mexicana (AEM), said in an interview with *Cronica.com*. "Our services will be received through very small terminals, but they will benefit the entire country."

### *Fulfilling telecommunications reforms*

Ruiz Esparza said the expansion of service to remote communities fulfills one of the commitments President Enrique Peña Nieto's government made when promoting telecommunications reforms in 2013 ([SourceMex, March 27, 2013](#)). "We're on the right path," Ruiz Esparza said in reference to the administration's pledge to bring high-speed voice and data services to the greatest possible number of Mexicans.

Critics contend, however, that the Congress missed a chance to make important changes to Mexico's satellite-services sector during the telecommunications-reforms discussions. They argue that Mexico does not operate on an equal footing with international standards and is overly bureaucratic ([SourceMex, June 12, 2013](#)).

The launch of Morelos 3 will also help improve Mexico's global standing in connectivity. Mexico ranks 93rd in an Index of Access to Connectivity, which measures the cost, access, and level of competition in the telecommunications sector. "In broadband, Mexico would jump to fourth place on the index," said the daily newspaper *Excélsior*, quoting the SCT.

Morelos 3, which has a lifespan of about 15 years, will become Mexico's primary telecommunications satellite, replacing some of the functions that had been assigned to the Centenario satellite, which was destroyed during a failed launch from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan in May of this year. The launch of Centenario, which had cost about US\$300 million to build, was handled by the company International Launch Services. The satellite was insured, so all the costs—including the additional expense of US\$90 million to launch the unit—were recovered.

The Morelos 3 satellite, launched by Lockheed Martin Commercial Launch Services from Cape Canaveral, was constructed by Boeing Satellite Services, also at a cost of US\$300 million.

"This milestone marks the fourth generation of satellites that Boeing has built for Mexico," said Mark Spiwak, president of Boeing Satellite Systems International. "It highlights our satellites' capabilities as it improves the lives of Mexicans, in their daily activities and in emergency situations."

This is the third in the series of satellites carrying the name Morelos. Morelos 1 was launched by the US space shuttle *Discovery* in June 1985, and Morelos 2 was sent into orbit in November 1985. Mexico also put into orbit the *Solidaridad* satellites in the 1990s ([SourceMex, Oct. 19, 1994](#)) and the *SatMex* satellite in 2006 ([SourceMex, June 7, 2006](#)). The *Solidaridad I* satellite was lost prematurely in 2000 ([SourceMex, Sept. 6, 2000](#)).

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