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THALES' STAR TAKES ITS FIRST FLIGHT

APRIL 2013: The Thales Communications SRW Tactical Airborne Relay (STAR) has recently flown for the U.S. Army's Expeditionary Warrior Experiment (AEWE) aboard Lockheed Martin's Desert Hawk UAV and Space and Missile Defense Command Wasp Aerostat. During the event, the STAR successfully supported SRW network extension and allowed for the passing of voice and data between warfighters beyond the terrestrial line-of-sight.

The STAR, developed for use in unmanned and manned platforms where size, weight, and power are a major concern, leverages the core technology of the AN/PRC-154A Nett Warrior Radio.

The engineering design effort primarily comprises a repackaging of the existing AN/PRC-154A Nett Warrior Radio board set to address the environmental extremes associated with combat aerial platforms. These stresses can include rotary wing vibration—helicopter and Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), gunfire/missile shock, thermal, and altitude. In addition, the STAR addresses an aircraft mounting scheme as well as direct aircraft power via a 10 – 40 VDC MIL-STD-704 compliant power brick and supply.

Operationally, the STAR provides the warfighter with assured access to terrestrial networks by providing a network extension to the battlefield's edge. In addition, it allows combat aircraft inclusion into the Soldier Radio Waveform (SRW) network where air-ground operational integration is critical. In this capacity, the STAR acts as an airborne-hosted advantaged node allowing networked voice and data (video, sensor data, position locator information) connectivity to various battle groups that would normally be unable to communicate.

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