

Kacific to double in size as first satellite launch nears, mulls second satellite

by [Caleb Henry](#) — January 2, 2019



Kacific-1 is scheduled to launch in the third quarter of 2019 on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket. Credit: Boeing

WASHINGTON — With less than a year to go before the launch of its first telecom satellite, Kacific is planning a hiring spree to prepare for service across the Asia Pacific.

Based in Singapore with an office in the island nation of Vanuatu, Kacific has been running an interim connectivity service since 2017 using a network built on a patchwork of Ku-band coverage from other satellites.

The success of that service has prepared the way for Kacific-1 when it launches this year on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket, and gives Kacific the confidence to begin planning a second satellite, CEO Christian Patouraux said in an interview.

Patouraux said Kacific-1, a high-throughput Ka-band “condosat” that shares the same chassis as Japanese operator Sky Perfect JSAT’s JCSAT-18, is slated for launch in the third quarter of 2019. Boeing is building the satellite.

Customers that signed take or pay contracts for Kacific-1 capacity amount to a backlog of business worth \$618 million, Patouraux said. Many of the satellite’s 56 spot beams, which span 25 countries from mountainous Nepal to the islands of French Polynesia, are already fully subscribed with customers.

Originally announced with 57 beams, Patouraux said Kacific and Boeing finalized the design of Kacific-1 with 56 beams after a final tweak to the satellite’s coverage in 2017. All but two beams have pre-launch customers, he said.



Kacific-1 coverage map. Credit: Kacific.

Kacific is currently around 20 people, Patouraux said, but hopes to number 40 to 45 by June, bolstering sales and marketing, as well as and technical staff for a network operations center the company plans to build in Singapore.

Patouraux said Kacific doesn't intend to place an order for a Kacific-2 satellite before the launch of Kacific-1, but is spending money on the preparatory work today.

“We’ve presented a plan for a Kacific-2 satellite recently to our board,” he said. “This is something that we are definitely considering, we just want to make sure that this happens at a suitable time when we have the resources in the company to give our attention.”

In September, the company signed an \$11 million contract with Kratos Defense and Security Solutions to build satellite gateway ground stations for the satellite.

Patouraux said the company will have five ground stations in total — two in Indonesia, two in the Philippines and one in Australia. The range of locations provides site diversity in case of poor weather, and helps ensure regulators provide market access to some of the most populated countries in the Kacific-1 footprint, he said.

Patouraux said Indonesia has a regulatory requirement for a domestic gateway and that the Philippines has a “soft preference” for service to come from a domestic teleport.

Kacific is focused on providing connectivity through very small aperture terminals to schools, hospitals, companies, governments and other customers. Patouraux said Kacific plans to provide cellular backhaul and satellite trunking services too. Aviation and other mobility markets hotly pursued by the majority of satellite operators Kacific will not be a primary focus, he said.

Patouraux said Kacific-1’s estimated maximum total throughput is around 75 gigabits per second. The future Kacific-2 would be “potentially a very large type of asset,” he said, potentially requiring a standalone satellite bus instead of a shared platform like Kacific-1 and JCSAT-18. Patouraux said Kacific-2 would deepen the company’s presence in the Asia-Pacific and may expand coverage westward.

The success of Kacific’s interim service and the company’s backlog of customers have affirmed its plan to dedicate a satellite to islands often overlooked by other operators, Patouraux said. New Ka-band competition is on the horizon, however, notably from SES with the O3b mPower system Boeing is building for a 2021 launch, and Viasat with its so-far unordered ViaSat-3 Asia-Pacific satellite. Patouraux said Kacific has a head start offering low-priced connectivity in the region and will dig in to preserve that lead.

“Kacific has a formidable first-mover advantage,” he said. “We know our market, we know the customer — we are getting entrenched in these markets. As you know in satellite, first mover advantage is really paramount.”

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