

U.S., European Negotiators To Discuss Galileo

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posted: 02:21 pm ET, 20 June 2002

BRUSSELS — U.S. and European negotiators are meeting June 20-21 to iron out their differences over Europe's planned Galileo satellite navigation system and Galileo's consequences for the existing U.S. Global Positioning System (GPS).

The meeting is occurring just as European Union heads of state are set to meet June 21-22 in Seville, Spain, to try and reach a settlement in the German-Italian tug of war over leadership of the Galileo program. That dispute has frozen the Galileo program for the past three months despite the fact that European governments have approved more than enough funding to get Galileo started.

Achilleas Mitsos, director-general for research at the European Commission, said in a statement here June 19 that European Union heads of state will be asked in Seville to force a settlement on Germany and Italy to facilitate "a final, absolutely final, resolution of the issue."

The heart of the negotiations between the United States and Europe are Europe's plans to place Galileo's security-related service at or near the planned GPS military code, the code allied troops use for navigation, location, timing, targeting and other purposes.

U.S. and NATO officials are worried that if Galileo's Public Regulated Service operates from frequencies near the GPS military frequencies, NATO could not block enemy use of Galileo without also knocking out GPS use by allied forces.

The European Commission and the U.S. State Department are leading the negotiations for the two sides in an attempt to assure that Galileo and GPS mutually reinforce each other for global users without interference.

Robert G. Bell, assistant NATO secretary-general for defense support, said here June 19 that NATO respects Europe's right to develop Galileo but is concerned about GPS's military effectiveness if Galileo occupies the same portion of the radio spectrum.

Bell said the NATO C3 Board, in charge of consultation, command and control issues, has been asked to review the Galileo-GPS relationship "in the context of military effectiveness."

"The stakes here are huge, and I'm not talking about dollars or euros," Bell said. "I am talking about our nations' security and the well-being of the men and women in uniform we send in harm's way. Therefore, the sooner we can wrestle these technical issues to the ground, the better."