

XTAR

By Jay Icard, President and Chief Executive Officer

It's no surprise that 2018 was a year of competition in the satellite communications (SATCOM) arena.

The last 12 months witnessed a sharp increase in players in the market including new technologies which continue to emerge. Through this type of growth, it is natural for there to be a lot of noise as well as misconceptions as new players quickly work to find their niche but in the meantime, purport to have solutions for all users, commercial and government.

Human nature tells us to believe that the newest technology must be the best — and, in some cases, it is, but as XTAR points out, it is not necessarily the best fit for the government and military. President and CEO *Jay Icard*, who started with the company in March, explains, *"Military and government users have a unique set of needs. Those needs cannot be filled by trying to retrofit a solution which was originally designed for a commercial user."*



XTAR capacity has been used by some of the most demanding customers, due to their mission requirements. Icard states that it is available to many more who have either never used X-band or have their experience only on government constellations.

Despite increased competition, XTAR continues to send the message that it serves only one customer — the government and military user and the X-band frequency that is reserved solely for that use. The natural advantages of the frequency include low atmospheric attenuation, meaning satellite links hold strong in rain, dust storms and other challenging weather. X-band also enjoys a low probability of interference from other satellites. Finally, high throughput allows the military/government user to efficiently transmit bandwidth-heavy applications.



These advantages make X-band unique and, as Icard explained, makes X-band more relevant than ever as missions must be highly mobile, resist interference, and work consistently in challenging environments. *"We have to remain laser focused on that end user in the field. His or her mission depends on communications that don't fail in a little rain. It has to perform and has to perform well."*

XTAR had the opportunity to demonstrate this performance in July when they conducted testing at Fort A.P. Hill with the goal to provide a **SATCOM-On-The-Move (SOTM)** data link from a small sub-meter terminal to a hub Earth station at a data rate greater than 25 Mbps. XTAR was able to successfully show the power of X-band to small terminals — the required space segment for this demonstration at 26/2 Mbps was 38.2 MHz, resulting in a bandwidth efficiency of 0.73 bits/Hz. During the demonstration, heavy rain began to fall, yet the link held strong.

Defining the Acquisition Process

Undoubtedly, another challenge faced by XTAR and other satellite operators in 2018 has been the acquisition process. There is much discussion and debate as to the best way for governments to purchase commercial bandwidth, and to do so in an expedient manner.

XTAR has taken part in the **Analysis of Alternatives (AoA)** and been involved with several industry initiatives sharing their experience and opinion.

When it comes to acquisition, Icard sees XTAR's position as unique. As XTAR provides a government-only frequency, when an operation has parameters that requires a quick reaction capability, requires high throughput to a sub-one meter terminal, or simply needs additional capacity, they can seamlessly "point" to XTAR and continue service.

"The discussion for streamlining the acquisition process is vital," stated Icard, *"But XTAR positions itself as an instant alternative when bandwidth is needed immediately."*

Several military end users have expressed their interest in further enabling streamlined acquisition for services similar to XTAR. Icard anticipates some procurement actions from **Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center (SMC)**, which is the new home for commercial SATCOM acquisition for the DoD, in Government Fiscal Year 2019.

Despite this year's challenges faced by satellite operators around the globe, XTAR continues steadfastly doing its job,

often quietly behind the scenes. The company feels that while competition is not going away, new players will find their own suitable specialized applications.

Icard explained, *"We're not out to proclaim that X-band is the one-size fits all solution. In many scenarios encountered by our user, X-band is the ideal frequency. But as military users evolve into multi-band systems where they can use the most advantageous link, X-band provides one of the tools in the multi-band toolbox."*

Looking Ahead

The year has been challenging for most satellite operators. However, like the X-band frequency which holds strong in challenging conditions, XTAR remains resilient. The company was the first commercial satellite operator to provide capacity in the X-band frequency. While XTAR has shared in the challenges faced by other operators, it is presented with a different set of opportunities as well.

Icard said, *"I came to XTAR because I was interested in having something unique to bring to market. We simply need to make the X-band product an enabler for the military operators and systems integrator community. It has to provide a competitive advantage on the solution and price and we have to make working with us easy. We are doing just that."*

By dedicating operations to serve only one customer and not facing distractions from commercial sales, XTAR can remain laser focused on designing solutions for the government and military user.

Icard added, *"We have some exciting announcements coming in the near future that will expand our product set, provide broader coverage and further enhance our products in security and resiliency. XTAR is very eager to share plans for the new satellites with customers and partners. The future is exciting for our company."*

Plans for XTAR's replacement satellites are in the process of being finalized now and Icard explains that the design of the new satellites reflects that focus on the government and military user.

xtar.com

Mr. Icard was appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of XTAR in March, 2018. Jay is responsible for the overall direction, strategy and business operations for XTAR. Mr. Icard has over 30 years of industry experience in government and enterprise telecommunications. He spent the last 13 years in profit and loss management and business development leadership roles with TeleCommunication Systems Inc. (TCS) which was acquired by Comtech in 2016. Prior to his tenure at Comtech and TCS, Mr. Icard worked for Oracle, MCI and in the Department of Defense acquisition community.