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Author: Mr. Philippe Jung  
Airbus SAS, France, philippe.jung10@gmail.com

ARABSAT, HISTORY'S SECOND INTERNATIONAL TELECOM SATELLITE ORGANIZATION

**Abstract**

Only one day after the launch of the first geostationary satellite, the Hughes HS 301 Syncom 3, an international organization for the use of such telecommunications satellites, Intelsat, was created in Washington by 14 nations on 20 August 1964. This revolution, the first application of astronautics, made the world a big global village, and Hughes for long the number one company for civil telecom satellites. This inspired the League of Arab States to be similarly united through a telecommunications consortium: ASCO (Arab Satellite Communications Organisation) thus was created in 1976. Dr Ali Al Mashat was chosen to be its founding Director General. History's second such wide international body, this unique consortium of 21 countries spread from Western Africa to the Middle East: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, North Yemen, South Yemen. "Arabsat" was to again make history on 25 May 1981, when an unexpected contract was signed for three Spacebus 100 satellites with Aerospatiale of France, the first time a non-american company exported its satellites. This was to be the beginning of the Spacebus family, which became a best-seller over the whole world, as well as of a long association between Arabsat and Aerospatiale, with two Arabsat 2 and later the Arabsat 3A. This paper retraces the early history of Arabsat and the Spacebus family, with the precious contribution of Dr Al Mashat and the Arabsat satellites team.