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World's first video relay service at 30,000 feet

The world's first video relay service at 30,000 feet is being officially launched during IBC 2003 in Amsterdam. Operating from a fixed-wing aircraft, the Skylink service uses a single repeater platform and provides significant cost and performance benefits over current relay services, with the ability to operate in all weather conditions and over any terrain.

Ideally suited for geographically dispersed sporting events such as cycling, motor sport, marathons, sailing and other maritime sports, Skylink will also prove invaluable to electronic news gathering (ENG) and for security force reconnaissance. Launched as a partnership between GlobalLink, Lions Air and QinetiQ, with tpc as the preferred service provider, Skylink has already been successfully deployed to cover the Zurich Grand Prix world cup cycling event in August 2003.

Welcoming the launch of Skylink, Lions Air CEO Jürg Fleischmann said; "Skylink provides broadcasters with a complete video relay package giving significant savings alongside improved performance. It is a great example of collaborative working and fully exploits the Skylink partners' expertise in broadcast, radar, and aviation."

Because the Pilatus PC-12 operates at a much higher altitude than any helicopter, multiple transmitters at multiple locations require only one airborne platform. In comparison, the current relay system to provide live video feed for an event like the Tour de France might involve the use of up to seven helicopters. With hourly operating costs for a helicopter being comparable to that of the Pilatus PC-12, the cost benefits of Skylink are immediately apparent.

The Pilatus PC-12 also has the important added all weather capability which allows it to operate in poor weather unlike helicopters. The aircraft, operated by Lions Air, is capable of flying for up to seven and a half hours before refuelling, has a slow cruising speed to maintain tight geographical positioning above an event and requires only a short runway for take-off and landing.

The QinetiQ antenna is capable of tracking multiple mobile transmitters of any signal type without the requirement of any positioning data links; hence reducing the hardware, deployment, and operating costs at broadcasting events. Each SKYLINK antenna can form four beams; this does not compromise the link performance as each beam has the total antenna gain – the overall gain is NOT shared between the beams. With no moving parts the antenna is a low profile; highly reliable; zero maintenance solution.

The downlink is a standard monopole antenna used for transmitting the downlink from the PILATUS PC-12 to a high gain antenna (+32 dBi) used to receive the signal on the ground. These antennas and tracking system on the ground are supplied by GlobalLink. With a scanning range of $\pm 70^\circ$, the PC-12 can receive uplinks out to 30km. Then these pictures can be relayed back to the designated receive site, which can be over 70km away. With the GPS transmit antenna fitted, this downlink range increases to over 200km.

Skylink will be demonstrated on a daily basis during IBC 2003. Visitors interested in seeing the system demonstrated should visit Skylink at **Stand OEH214 (outside Holland Hall 11)**, between 1415 and 1445.

Visit the Skylink website at www.skylink.aero

Notes for Editors:

- **About GlobalLink:** GlobalLink specialises in mobile microwave communications and video transmissions, and has become a major contributor in the production of live and non-live broadcasts. GlobalLink own and operate five mobile satellite transmission vehicles, analogue and digital video equipment, antennas and production capabilities.
- **About Lions Air:** The Lions Air Group is based in Zurich and has over 15 years of experience of charter air travel. Founded in 1986, Lions Air has expanded to become the largest PC-12 operator in Europe. The PC-12s are used to transport passengers quickly and safely, as well as to relay radio communications and microwave video links.
- **About QinetiQ:** QinetiQ is Europe's largest science and technology solutions companies that employs nearly 10,000 staff, including many of the UK's leading scientists and internationally acclaimed experts. Founded from the laboratories of the UK Ministry of Defence, today QinetiQ operates in markets as diverse as marine, energy, telecommunications, automotive, rail, electronics, defence, space, health, oil & gas, aerospace and information technology. QinetiQ's heritage covers the pioneering research and development of many household technologies such as liquid crystal displays (LCDs), carbon fibre, the technology for flat panel speakers, infra-red sensors and microwave radar, a life saving foetal heart monitoring system, plus other significant advancements in the areas of passenger security and transport.
- **About tpc:** tv productioncenter zurich (tpc) is Switzerland's largest and most comprehensive production facility in the audio-visual media industry. A subsidiary of SRG SSR idée suisse, tpc is a sought-after service provider for mobile productions and employs 800 people in the areas of studio production, outside broadcasting, postproduction and scenery.

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