



# Frequency Allocation for Government-funded CubeSats: NSF Paves the Way

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Bryan Klofas  
Research Engineer  
SRI International  
bryan.klofas@sri.com

# Introduction

- The CubeSat and Amateur Radio communities have always had a mutually beneficial relationship
  - University CubeSat teams bring exciting ideas, education, and new operators to the table
  - Amateurs bring RF knowledge, ground station experience, and spectrum
- Consequently, most CubeSats launched used the Amateur-Satellite Service for communications, even satellites that don't fit into the Amateur-Satellite Service
- Funding issues prevent NSF CubeSats from using Amateur radio frequencies
- This paper intends to show that obtaining an NTIA license is possible for NSF-sponsored CubeSats

# CubeSat Launches (1 of 2)

- Eurockot Launch (30 June 2003)
  - AAU1 CubeSat
  - DTU sat-1
  - CanX-1
  - Cute-1 (CO-55)
  - QuakeSat-1
  - XI-IV (CO-57)
- SSETI Express (27 Oct 2005)
  - XI-V (CO-58)
  - NCube-2
  - UWE-1
- M-V-8 Launch (22 Feb 2006)
  - Cute-1.7+APD (CO-56)
- Dnepr Launch 1 (26 July 2006)  
(launch failure)
- Minotaur 1 (11 Dec 2006)
  - GeneSat-1 (2.4GHz)
- Dnepr Launch 2 (17 Apr 2007)
  - CSTB1
  - AeroCube-2
  - CP4
  - Libertad-1
  - CAPE1
  - CP3
  - MAST
- PSLV-C9 (28 Apr 2008)
  - Delfi-C3 (DO-64)
  - SEEDS-2 (CO-66)
  - CanX-2
  - AAUSAT-II
  - Cute 1.7+APD II (CO-65)
  - Compass-1
- Falcon Launch 1 (2 Aug 2008)  
(launch failure)

Green = Amateur  
Red = Experimental  
Blue = NTIA  
Purple = ISM

# CubeSat Launches (2 of 2)

- Minotaur-1 (19 May 2009)
  - AeroCube-3
  - CP-6
  - HawkSat-1
  - PharmaSat (2.4 GHz)
- ISILaunch 01 (23 Sep 2009)
  - BEESAT
  - UWE-2
  - ITUpSAT1
  - SwissCube
- Japanese H-IIA F17 (20 May 2010)
  - K-Sat
  - Waseda-SAT2
  - Negai Star
- PSLV-C15 (12 July 2010)
  - Tlsat-1
  - STUDSAT
- STP-S26 (19 Nov 2010)
  - RAX-1 (2.4 GHz)
  - O/ORES (2.4 GHz)
  - NanoSail-D2
- Falcon 9-002 (8 Dec 2010)
  - Perseus (4)
  - QbX (2)
  - SMDC-ONE
  - Mayflower
- Taurus XL (4 Mar 2011)  
(launch failure)
- PSLV-C18 (12 Oct 2011)
  - Jungu
- ELaNa 3/NPP (28 Oct 2011)
  - M-Cubed
  - DICE (2)
  - Explorer-1'
  - RAX-2 (2.4 GHz)
  - AubieSat-1

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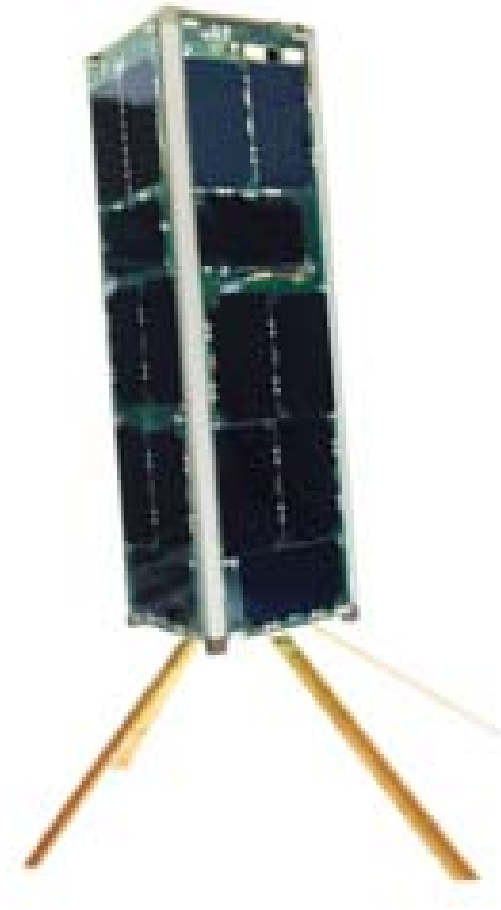
Totals:  
40 Amateur  
3 Experimental  
9 NTIA  
7 ISM  
55 CubeSats

# NSF Program

- Started in 2008 by Therese Jorgensen, Division of Atmospheric and Geospace Sciences at NSF
- Two goals: education and space weather
- \$900k per award
- NSF has a Spectrum Management Department that can help CubeSats get licenses for transmission in government bands
- Currently 8 CubeSats funded
  - 3 NTIA
  - 4 Amateur
  - 1 Undecided
- New call coming out in Spring 2012

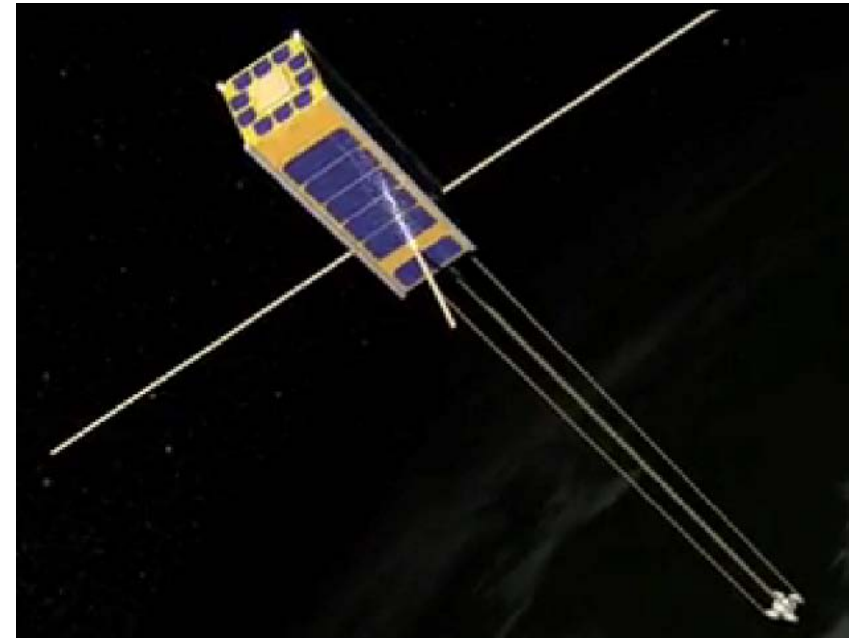
# RAX

- University of Michigan and SRI International
  - UHF Radar receiver experiment
  - One 3U CubeSat
  - **Amateur: 437.505 MHz**
  - **Microhard MHX-2400 S-band ISM**
  - Launched 19 November 2010
  - Power problems ended mission early
- 
- RAX-2 Launched 28 October 2011
  - Operating normally



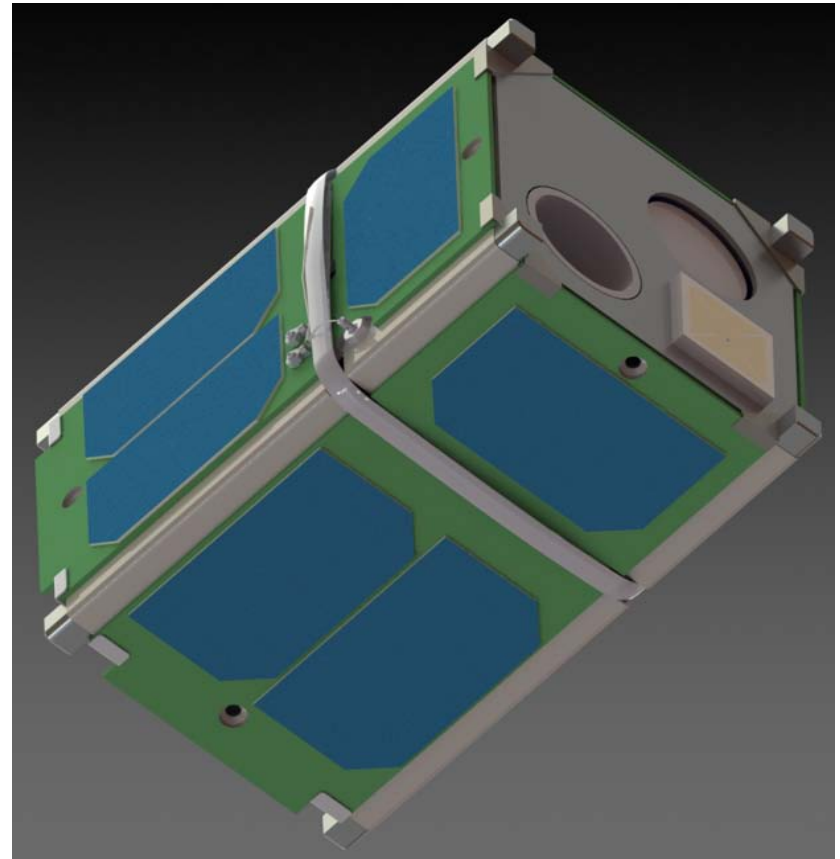
# Firefly

- Siena College and NASA Goddard Space Flight Center
- Will measure links between ground lightning and terrestrial gamma ray flashes
- One 3U CubeSat
- Space Research: 401 MHz



# FIREBIRD

- Montana State University and University of New Hampshire
- Will measure relativistic electron bursts from the inner radiation belts
- Two 1.5U CubeSats
- **Amateur: 145 MHz**





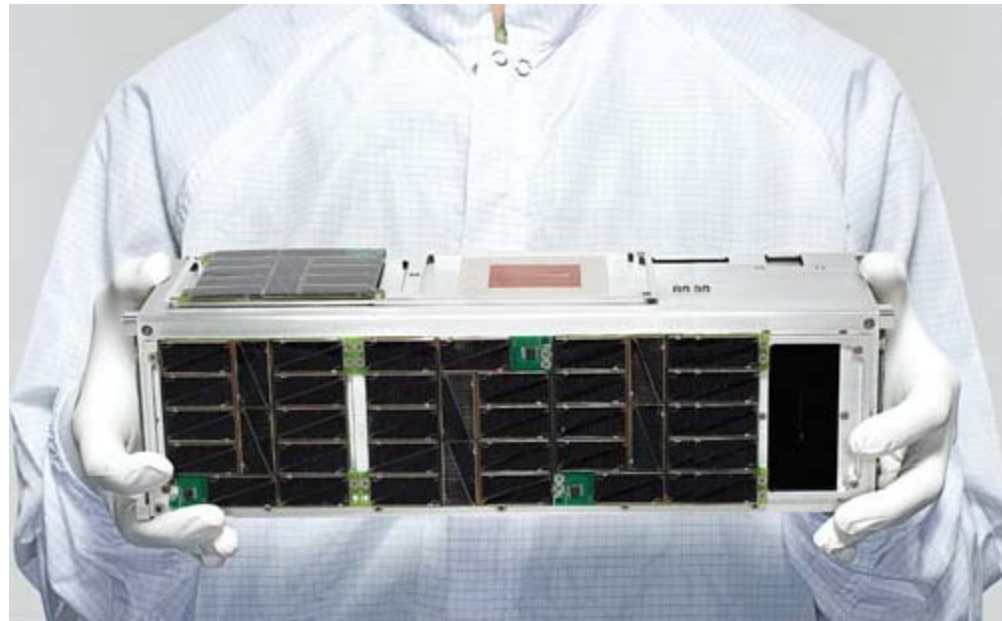
# DICE

- ASTRA LLC and Utah State University
  - Measuring ionospheric density
  - Two 1.5U CubeSats
  - **Meteorological Satellite: 460 MHz**
- 
- Launched 28 October 2011
  - Successful contact



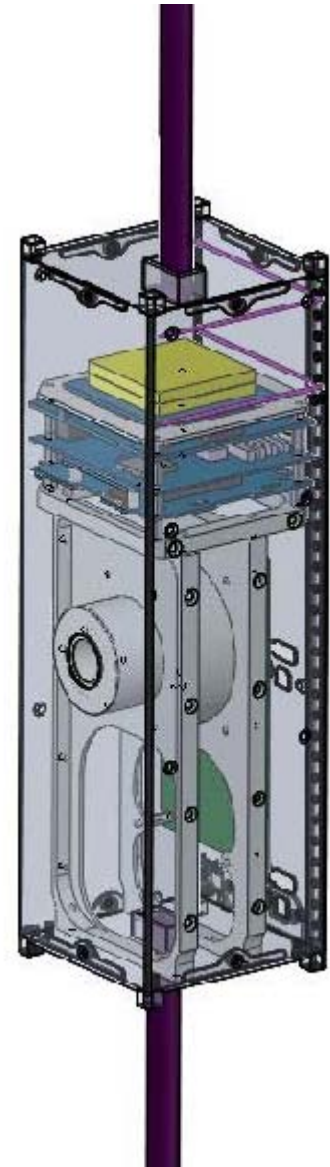
# CINEMA

- University of California Berkeley and Kyung Hee University
  - Will measure ions, electrons, and neutrals at high ecliptic latitudes
  - One (plus two) 3U CubeSat
  - [Space Research: 2.2 GHz](#)
- 
- Scheduled for launch on ELaNa6/OUTSat



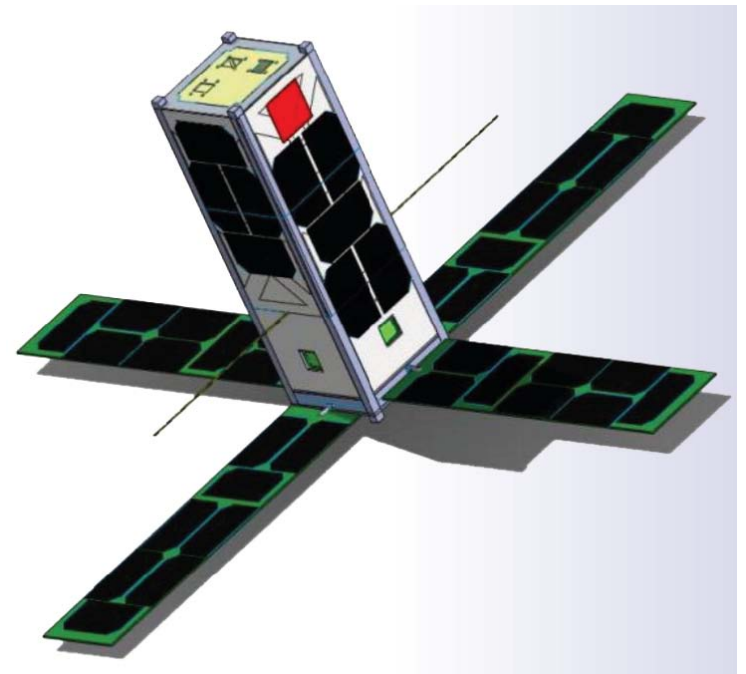
# CSSWE

- University of Colorado-Boulder
  - Will measure impacts of solar flares on the earth's outer radiation belts
  - One 3U CubeSat
  - **Experimental: 437.345 MHz**
- 
- Scheduled for launch on ELaNa6/OUTSat



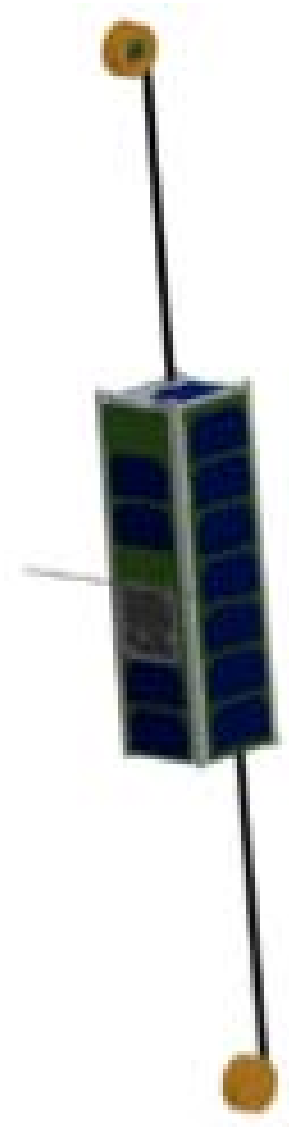
# CADRE

- University of Michigan
- Will measure the density and composition of a perturbed thermosphere
- One 3U CubeSat
- Amateur: 437 MHz (Undecided)



# EXOCUBE

- Scientific Solutions, Cal Poly, and University of Wisconsin
- Will measure neutral and ion densities using a mass spectrometer
- One 3U CubeSat
- UHF Frequencies Undecided



# License Summary

Table 1: Summary of NSF CubeSat Licenses.

Award	Satellite	Downlink	License			
			Type	Agency	Sponsor	Status
1	RAX	437.505 MHz	Amateur	FCC	UMich	Granted
	Firefly	401 MHz	Space Research	NTIA	NASA Wallops	Submitted
ARRA <sup>1</sup>	FIREBIRD	145 MHz	Amateur	FCC	MSU	Not submitted
	DICE	460 MHz	Meteorological Satellite	NTIA	NSF	Certified
2	CINEMA	2.2 GHz	Space Research <sup>2</sup>	NTIA	NSF	Certified
	CSSWE	437.345 MHz	Experimental	FCC	UColorado	Coordinated
3	CADRE	437 MHz	Amateur	FCC	UMich	Not submitted
	ExoCube	UHF	?	?	?	Not submitted

<sup>1</sup> These two awards were paid for by The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. NSF will not coordinate or fund a launch for these satellites, so the award was increased to compensate.

<sup>2</sup> Because larger satellite projects at UC Berkeley also use these frequencies, they have existing knowledge and hardware for these frequencies.

# Downlink Summary

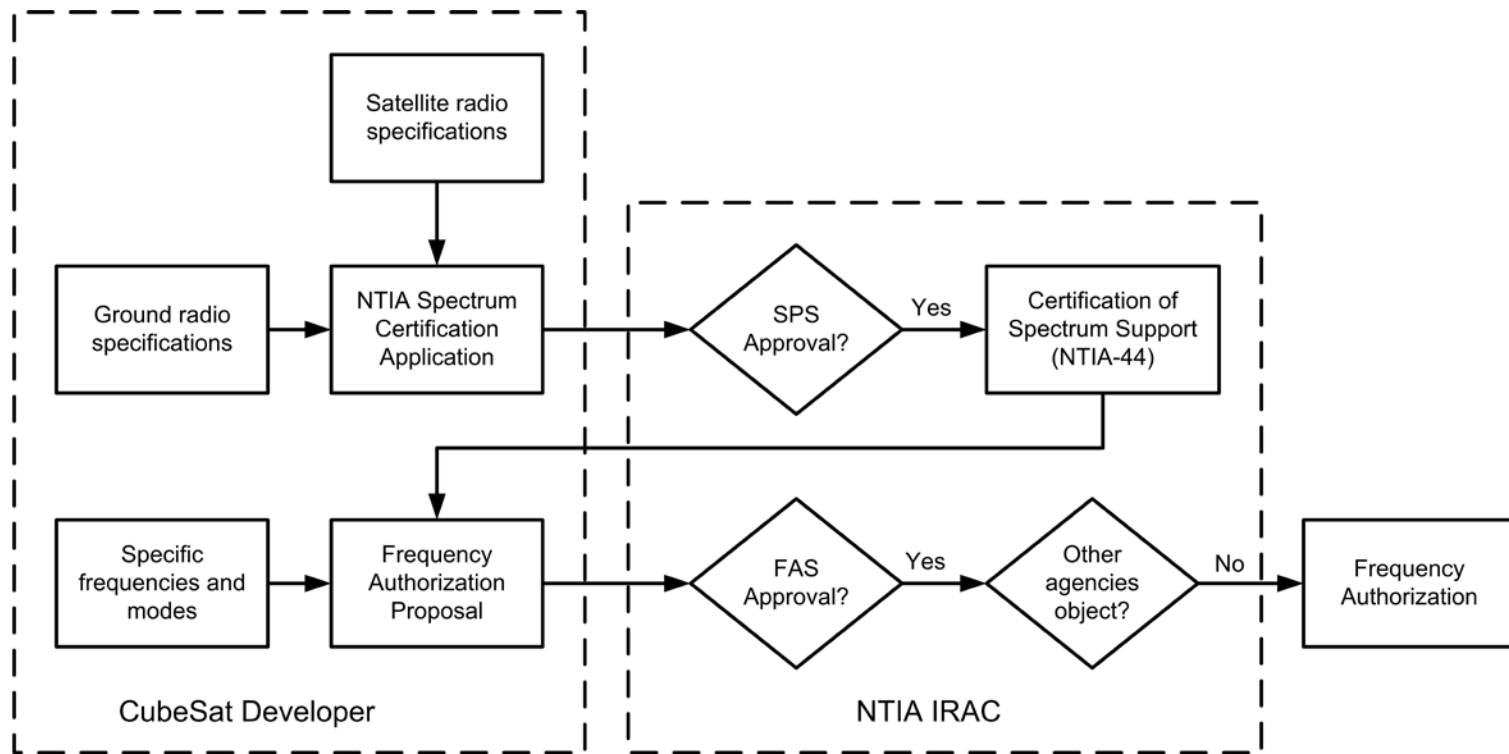
Table 2: Summary of spacecraft transmitters.

Satellite	Downlink	Modulation	Spacecraft TX	Groundstation RX	Launch
RAX	437.505 MHz	9600 baud FSK	AstroDev Helium	Icom 910	STP-S26 <sup>1</sup>
Firefly	401 MHz	38.4 kbps FSK	AstroDev Colony-2	Microdyne 1200-MRC	ELaNa Approved
FIREBIRD	145 MHz	19200 baud FSK	AstroDev Helium	FUNcube Dongle	ELaNa Approved
DICE	460 MHz	1.5 Mbps BPSK	L3 Cadet	USRP	ELaNa3/NPP
CINEMA	2.2 GHz	1 Mbps	Emhiser	11m dish	ELaNa6/OUTSat
CSSWE	437.345 MHz	9600 baud FSK	AstroDev Lithium	TS-2000	ELaNa3/OUTSat
CADRE	437 MHz	9600 baud FSK	AstroDev Lithium	Icom 910	ELaNa <sup>2</sup>
ExoCube	UHF	9600 baud FSK	AX5042	Yaesu 847	ELaNa <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As opposed to all the other NSF CubeSats discussed in this paper, RAX was actually launched on this rocket in November 2010.

<sup>2</sup> These teams will presumably apply for the ELaNa program in the November 2011 call, although they may not actually be launched through the ELaNa program.

# NTIA Process



- Andy Clegg and Tom Gergely from NSF help teams navigate this application process
- DICE and CINEMA successfully completed this process
- Long term prospects for a “small satellite” group under Space Research Service looks very promising; see paper



# Summary/Recent News

- NSF-funded CubeSats are beginning to move away from using Amateur Radio frequencies
- However, this process will take time as the process is worked out and documented
- Long-term “small satellite” allocation is moving forward, but expect process to take 10 more years
- Miscommunication between FCC, ITU, and CubeSats on latest ELaNa launch on 28 October 2011
  - 4 days before launch the ITU asks why all the CubeSats are unlicensed
  - Situation cleared up before launch
  - All CubeSats heard from

# Thank You

bryan.klofas@sri.com



*Headquarters: Silicon Valley*

**SRI International**

333 Ravenswood Avenue  
Menlo Park, CA 94025-3493  
650.859.2000

*Washington, D.C.*

**SRI International**

1100 Wilson Blvd., Suite 2800  
Arlington, VA 22209-3915  
703.524.2053

*Princeton, New Jersey*

**SRI International Sarnoff**

201 Washington Road  
Princeton, NJ 08540  
609.734.2553

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