Sofradir acquires Sagem and Thales’ infrared (IR) detector technology development

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Sagem (Safran group), Thales and Sofradir have signed an agreement for Sofradir to acquire Sagem and Thales’ infrared (IR) detector technology development and manufacturing facilities. Sagem and Thales bring to Sofradir IR technologies originally developed for their internal purposes.

IR detectors are advanced technology components at the centre of multiple military, space, commercial and scientific applications: thermal imagers, missile seekers, surveillance systems, targeting systems or observation satellites. Their performance and price are key to the competitiveness of optronics systems.

Under the agreement, Sagem will transfer to Sofradir the Indium Antimonide (InSb) technology. The Quantum Well-Infrared Photodetector (QWIP) and Indium Gallium Arsenide (InGaAs) technologies will be transferred to Sofradir from the GIE III-V Lab, an economic interest group with partners Alcatel Lucent, Thales and research institute CEA (the French nuclear energy and alternate energies commission).
By consolidating these IR technologies under one roof, Sofradir joins a very small circle of IR detector manufacturers with expertise in all the cooled and uncooled IR technologies. The acquisition will reinforce Sofradir’s leading position in Europe and pave the way to a global leadership position in the imaging market. Sofradir is currently ranked number one for volume deliveries of IR detectors based on its Mercury Cadmium Telluride (HgCdTe) technology.

Serge Adrian, senior vice president of land defence at Thales and Philippe Petitcolin, chairman and CEO of Sagem praised the agreement that strengthens a key technopole and further enhances years of research initially carried out by Thales and then by the III-V Lab and Sagem: “We are confident that Sofradir will take these IR activities to the next level and benefit from the synergies between the different IR technologies.”

“The technologies from Sagem and the III-V Lab enable Sofradir to have from this point forward the complete portfolio of infrared technologies. These assets consolidate Sofradir’s leadership position,” said Philippe Bensussan, chairman and CEO of Sofradir. “With the new technologies, Sofradir along with its subsidiary ULIS will be able to select the technology best adapted to our clients’ applications. We are in a fortified position to offer IR products with more innovation, performance and compactness in order to respond to any IR market need.”