

# US satellite system needs \$18m for lift-off

By Robert Temple

An American company is seeking \$18 million (£14.4 million) to install a satellite system which could revolutionize communications, navigation and transport.

About \$7million has already been raised in the private sector for Geostar Corporation's system which will become operational in the US early next year, with a service for Europe in place possibly by the end of 1987.

The system uses hand-held "transceivers", powered by ordinary pencil batteries, which will enable subscribers to send two-way telexes, emergency requests for help, and precise details of their whereabouts within a fraction of a second.

They can also establish their locations, accurate to within one metre, their direction and velocity, whether on land, at sea or in the air.

An announcement on the system, which has no government involvement, will be made later today in America.

The first space components will go into orbit early in 1986, as part of a "G-Star" satellite launched by the French Ariane rocket. Extension to Europe would require further satellite launches.

Geostar is the brainchild of American physics expert, Professor Gerard K. O' Neill of Princeton, who is also President of Geostar Corporation and the Space Studies Institute. He has so refined the technology of Geostar that it can now operate by "back-packing" its space components on other people's satellites. Geostar has signed a full business agreement for 10 years with General Telephone & Electronics, America's second biggest telephone company, to launch its space components.

The first satellite elements will be completed by R. C. A. Astro-Electronics by September 9, and integrated by November into a G.T.E. satellite.

Estimates of the final cost of the full Geostar project have been about \$300 million, but today's announcement will reveal this has been cut to an estimated \$60 million.

This does not count the cost of mass manufacture of hand-held "transceivers", which would eventually cost about \$450.