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If foes utilize Europe's Galileo GPS network, U.S. may attack it: report

LONDON (AFP-Jiji) The United States could attack Europe's planned network of global positioning satellites if it is used by a hostile power such as China, The Business weekly reported Sunday.

Galileo, a constellation of 30 satellites and ground stations due to go into operation in 2008, is being launched by the European Union and the European Space Agency to tap into a growing market of global satellite positioning.

China last month became a partner in the Galileo program, which could help provide services such as communications for the 2008 Beijing Olympics but also has applications for strategic military use.

According to a leaked U.S. Air Force document written in August and obtained by The Business, Peter Teets, air force undersecretary, wrote, "What will we do 10 years from now when Ameri-

can lives are put at risk because an adversary chooses to leverage the global positioning system of perhaps the Galileo constellation to attack American forces with precision?"

The paper also reported a disagreement between EU and U.S. officials this month over Galileo at a London conference which led to the threat to blow up the future satellites.

The European delegates reportedly said they will not turn off or jam signals from their satellites, even if they are used in a war with the United States.

A senior European delegate at the London conference said his U.S. counterparts reacted to the EU position "calmly."

"They made it clear that they would attempt what they called reversible action, but, if necessary, they would use irreversible action," the official was quoted as saying.

Washington has long expressed doubts about Galileo, which could compete with its Global Positioning System (GPS), although the trans-Atlantic feud was reportedly ended following an agreement signed in June.

U.S. officials have voiced fears that the rival system, which has also brought on board Russia and Israel in addition to China, could compromise U.S. and NATO military operations which rely on GPS for navigation and combatant location and might also interfere with a classified Pentagon positioning system known as M-Code.

At one point, Washington suggested that Galileo was an unnecessary rival to GPS that merely duplicated the U.S. system.

Analysts said the U.S. threat to Galileo's future system exposed the true military value of the global navigation systems.