



FastWeb and Alcatel to develop a Broadband Telecommunications Network for the Italian Armed Forces

Milan, January 28th, 2004 – The Italian Ministry of Defence has awarded FastWeb and Alcatel a €25 million contract to develop its new integrated joint-forces telecommunications network. The two companies, in a temporary tender group, will provide a fully serviced broadband network, from network design and installation to infrastructure management and maintenance. The contract was awarded on the basis of a European Union Design Contest.

The initial phase will entail the deployment of an optical ring of approximately 1,500 Km linking the military district headquarters along the two trunk lines of Florence-Ferrara-Padua-Milan and Rome-Grosseto-Leghorn-La Spezia. Delivery is scheduled for the end of 2004.

The new proprietary and secure network of the Italian Armed Forces will be implemented using the most advanced technological platforms enabling the delivery of multiple services including voice, data and video applications as well as compliance with the stringent security requirements demanded of a strategic infrastructure of this kind. Simplicity of use and low-cost management are the other key network features.

The Network, which is referred to as R.I.F.O.N., the Italian acronym for National Joint Forces Optical Fibre Network, will be one of the most innovative in the sector. Based entirely on the optical technology supplied by Alcatel, the network will carry FastWeb's broadband telecommunications services and the company will provide its unique expertise in the field of fibre optic access networks.

"The deciding factor in this project was Alcatel's ability to provide across the board, end-to-end communications solutions that ensure maximum security and flexibility together with easy network management", said **Frederic Rose**, President of Alcatel's Integration and Services Division. "The best technological platforms and service capabilities have enabled us to develop a system that will put the Italian Armed Forces at the forefront in Europe".

"With this project, FastWeb's technology and expertise in the provisioning of broadband telecommunications services will be put to the service of our Armed Forces, promoting a fruitful exchange between civilian and military uses", said Alberto Trondoli COO of FastWeb. "The fact that our network is already in place in many of the areas now to be

covered by R.I.F.O.N. will allow us to extend our know-how in fibre optic access networks to this strategically critical infrastructure”.

About Alcatel

Alcatel provides end-to-end telecommunications solutions enabling operators, service providers and businesses to deliver any kind of content to any type of end-user anywhere in the world. Market leader for telecommunications networks with wide experience in applications and services, Alcatel helps its customers optimise their service offerings and grow their profitability. With sales in 2002 of 16.5 billion Euro, Alcatel operates in more than 130 countries. For more information, please visit Alcatel's website <http://www.alcatel.com>

FastWeb

FastWeb is Italy's main alternative fixed broadband telecommunications operator. Its innovative telecommunications services over fibre optics and ADSL deliver an integrated system enabling simultaneous access to telephony, video and high-speed Internet (up to 10 Mbit/s on fibre optics and 6 Mbit/s with ADSL) to customers in the main metropolitan areas (Milan, Rome, Genoa, Turin, Naples, Bologna, Venice, Biella and Reggio Emilia). At December 31, 2003 FastWeb had 330,000 customers. FastWeb is a subsidiary of e.Biscom S.p.A. which has been listed on Milan's *Nuovo Mercato* since March 30th, 2000. For more information, please visit e.Biscom's website at www.ebiscom.it.

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