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DLR-Webcast: SOFIA - the flying infrared observatory

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The Stratospheric Observatory For Infrared Astronomy, SOFIA, is a cooperative German-US space research project. The 2.5-metre telescope, housed in a Boeing 747SP, is designed to observe in the infrared. During flight, a four-by-six-metre door opens at the rear of the aircraft, through which the telescope can view the night sky. The plane is based in California; the telescope was designed and built in Germany.

In this German Aerospace Center (Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt; DLR) webcast, Alois Himmes, SOFIA Project Manager for DLR, tells us how the aircraft was modified to carry the telescope and reports on the project's scientific objectives. He explains the advantages and disadvantages of SOFIA in comparison with ground-based and orbital telescopes. Himmes also gives us an overview of the German contribution to the project and the significance of the 'First Light' flight – this video was shot before First Light was achieved in late May. He concludes by outlining the upcoming milestones for SOFIA. On the German side, the scientific aspects of the project are coordinated by the German SOFIA Institute (Deutsches SOFIA Institut; DSI) at the University of Stuttgart (Universität Stuttgart).



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