INDEPENDENT RESEARCH BRIEF · V3 · JUNE 2026

Post-TSG#112: NTN & 6G — From Spec Freeze to Deployment Reality

From Rel-19 NTN Phase 3 deployment to Rel-21 6G specification

Hervé Oudin · Synthesized from *The 6G Sovereign Framework* (Ronna-X, 2026) and public 3GPP outcomes · 8 pages · LinkedIn edition · Attribution permitted

At **3GPP TSG#112 in Singapore (8–12 June 2026)**, per public 3GPP reporting, the industry crossed two thresholds at once: **Release 19 NTN Phase 3** specifications are finalized (core Rel-19 complete 2025–2026), and **Release 21** — the first normative 6G specification track — now has an approved timeline (Stage-1 freeze March 2027; Stage-2 June 2028; ASN.1/OpenAPI code freeze March 2029, per RP-260868 / SP-260595 / CP-261259). TR 38.914 (6G scenarios and requirements) was approved the same week. The bottleneck is no longer air-interface theory. It is **whether validation infrastructure can keep pace with standards velocity** as features move from study → conformance → field pilot under orbital motion, hybrid TN–NTN routing, and device-layer constraints.

What changed in Singapore

- **Rel-21 6G timeline approved** — 14 Study Items for 6G progressing (per 3GPP TSG#112); TR 38.914 and related studies treat integrated terrestrial *and* non-terrestrial operation as a 6G design axis.
- **Rel-20 5G Advanced** — deployment-driven enhancements on schedule (per 3GPP reporting); operator focus shifts from feature freeze to operational proof.
- **Industry summit (12 June)** — AI/ML for RAN, ISAC, Massive MIMO evolution, **NTN standards cooperation**, and 6G security framed as a single systems problem (per 3GPP fringe-event reporting).
- **Rel-19 NTN Phase 3 specifications finalized** — store-and-forward, UE-to-UE via satellite, regenerative payloads, new MSS/Ku/HAPS bands, TN→NR-NTN mobility (incl. idle-mode LTE TN→NR-NTN), sub-5 MHz IoT-NTN RF — awaiting field evidence at scale.

Working thesis (updated): Field-native validation — synchronized wideband capture, edge-side analytics, ephemeris-aware correlation, and twin-linked iteration — becomes the *practical gate* between 3GPP feature freeze and revenue-bearing NTN/6G services. Lab conformance alone cannot sign off multi-release, multi-constellation pilots.

SECTION I · STANDARDS VELOCITY

NTN specification ladder — where validation must attach

Public 3GPP releases now stack faster than most operator field-trial cadences. Each phase adds capabilities that chamber tests alone cannot de-risk.

RELEASE	NTN / SATELLITE MILESTONE	FIELD-VALIDATION IMPLICATION
Rel-17	NR-NTN & IoT-NTN baseline; 5GSAT introduced	First lab-to-field gap exposed: ephemeris, long RTT, LEO handover
Rel-18	NTN Phase 2: mobility, regenerative payloads, D2D foundations	Transition-window KPIs; OAM gaps until Rel-19 management specs
Rel-19	**NTN Phase 3 + 5GSAT Phase 3** (finalized 2025–2026)	Store-and-forward, satellite UE-to-UE, GNSS-independent positioning, new bands, PWS, RedCap NTN, sub-5 MHz RF — each needs radiated + operational supplement
Rel-20	5G Advanced deployment enhancements (in progress)	Operator-driven regression suites; TN/NTN dual-steer and slicing under live traffic
Rel-21	**First normative 6G** (timeline approved TSG#112)	Study-to-spec bridge: falsify 6G hypotheses in field before Stage-2 freeze (June 2028)

Rel-19 NTN Phase 3 — new stressors for field trials

Selected public work items (3GPP Rel-19 summary, 2026) that extend the validation surface beyond Rel-17/18:

- **Store-and-forward** — intermittent connectivity profiles; buffer-state and latency under visibility gaps.
- **Direct UE-to-UE via satellite** — radiated paths, body/orientation effects, end-to-end QoS not visible in conducted setups.
- **TN → NR-NTN mobility** — idle-mode reselection from terrestrial LTE toward NR-NTN; handover windows dominate user experience.
- **Enhanced RF & test methodology** — high-power FR1-NTN UEs, sub-5 MHz carriers, IoT-NTN TDD on MSS spectrum.
- **MDT for NTN mobility** — drive-test and minimization-of-drive-test data must correlate with ephemeris, not just geo bins.

SECTION II · VALIDATION PHYSICS

Seven interdependent NTN validation challenges

Synthesis of public 3GPP and industry literature — updated for Rel-19 Phase 3 and the Rel-21 study-to-spec transition. Not any single vendor's product roadmap.

CHALLENGE	ENGINEERING MANIFESTATION	LAB-ONLY RISK
Residual Doppler & drift	LEO velocity → time-varying frequency offset; compensation lag degrades sync and EVM	Static emulators miss combined satellite + UE motion rate-of-change
Phase & timing sync	Long RTT; TA budgets; alignment with terrestrial 5G timing; store-and-forward buffering	Post-processing hides HARQ timeout and acquisition failures during visibility loss
Multi-satellite handover	Beam/satellite switches every few minutes; inter-constellation interoperability immature	Steady-state KPIs mask drops in transition windows (Rel-19 MDT scope)
Channel & geometry dynamics	Scintillation, non-stationary LoS; aviation/maritime/automotive profiles	Simplified tap models under-represent ephemeris-driven variability
End-to-end D2D / UE-to-UE QoS	Handheld efficiency, body loss, satellite-mediated UE-to-UE (Rel-19 5GSAT)	Conducted RF omits radiated and usage-context effects
Ground–space calibration	Payload, gateway, regenerative payload chain drift in operations	Factory calibration does not transfer to weather and ephemeris states
Release regression	Rel-17/18/19 feature stacks deployed together; TN–NTN dual-steer policies	Single-release conformance suites miss cross-release interaction faults

Device classes, NTN type & verticals

3GPP modes: **NR-NTN**, **IoT-NTN** (NB-IoT/LTE-M), **RedCap NTN** (Rel-19). Rel-19 sub-5 MHz IoT-NTN RF extends the IoT tier. Stressors by class:

DEVICE CLASS	NTN TYPE (3GPP)	SEGMENT	TYPICAL USE	REL-19 STRESSORS	VALIDATION EMPHASIS
Smartphone / D2D	NR-NTN	Handset	Satellite UE; emergency messaging	UE-to-UE via satellite; TN→NR-NTN mobility; body/orientation	Radiated supplement; transition KPIs; MNO SKU acceptance
Smartwatch / wearable	RedCap NTN	Wearable	Compact NTN adjunct; messaging	Body/orientation loss; duty-cycled wake; RedCap NTN RF	Radiated paths; multi-release regression
Asset tracker	IoT-NTN	IoT M2M	Intermittent position / status	Store-and-forward; short visibility; sub-5 MHz RF	Buffer-state / latency under visibility gaps
IoT module	RedCap NTN; IoT-NTN	IoT M2M	Module-integrated NTN; M2M	RedCap NTN; sub-5 MHz IoT-NTN carriers	GCF/PTCRB conformance; release-stacked regression
Automotive	NR-NTN	Automotive	Moving-platform connectivity; V2X (5GAA)	Geometry dynamics; TN–NTN mobility	Ephemeris correlation; geometry variability
Maritime	NR-NTN	Maritime	Shipboard / offshore connectivity	Scintillation; non-stationary LoS; maritime profile	Operational geometry; ephemeris correlation
Aeronautical	NR-NTN	Aeronautical	In-flight connectivity adjunct	Aviation profile; long RTT; phase/timing sync	Handover under platform motion; visibility KPIs

SECTION III · REFERENCE ARCHITECTURE

Field-native validation stack (vendor-neutral)

Terrestrial RAN workflows under-specify the **temporal and release-stacking dimensions** NTN introduces post-Singapore. Infrastructure must correlate RF capture, protocol state, ephemeris context, and *release/feature tag* concurrently.

Reference pattern for system architects bridging Rel-19 deployment trials and Rel-21 6G falsification cycles. Not a description of any commercial product suite.

Practitioner note: Keep validation evidence flowing across study → conformance → pilot → operations — a reusable checkpoint teams can iterate on, not a one-time TRL-6 sign-off. Metric: mean time to diagnose under live stress across releases, not peak throughput in a cabled setup.

1. Synchronized wideband acquisition

Multi-channel capture on GPS/PTP time base; bandwidth matched to NR-NTN and sub-5 MHz IoT-NTN configs — avoid aliasing transient handover and store-and-forward events.

2. Edge-side processing & labeling

First-pass analytics at the capture node while geometry and visibility windows are still observable — critical when satellite passes are short.

3. Live KPI, protocol & ephemeris correlation

Joint PHY (EVM, RSRP/SINR), MAC/RLC/RRC state, and orbital geometry — tie degradation to specific mobility and TN–NTN procedures, not aggregate scores.

4. Twin-linked iteration loop

Field captures feed channel models and system simulation; parameters return to trial configuration. Compresses iteration when reconfiguration is software-defined.

5. Release-aware scenario libraries

Documented profiles tagged by 3GPP release/feature (LEO pass, maritime, aeronautical, TN–NTN fallback, UE-to-UE satellite, store-and-forward) — comparable across builds and partners.

6. Study-to-spec bridge (new – Rel-21)

6G study items (AI/ML for RAN, ISAC, integrated TN+NTN architecture per TR 38.914) need **falsification in the field** before Stage-2 freeze (June 2028). Reconfigurable SDR/FPGA platforms with open APIs — not closed-box instruments tied to a single release train.

Singapore summit signal: NTN standards cooperation, ISAC, and AI-native RAN are no longer separate marketing lanes — they share the same validation bottleneck: causal evidence under operational geometry.

SECTION IV · ECOSYSTEM WHO'S WHO

Named players & alliances (public map)

Representative TN–NTN ecosystem for validation and pilot planning (2025–2026). Public affiliations only — not exhaustive.

MNOs (mobile network operators)

REGION	NAMED OPERATORS
Americas	Verizon · AT&T · T-Mobile US · Rogers · América Móvil
Europe	Vodafone · Deutsche Telekom · Orange · Telefónica · BT/EE · TIM
Asia-Pacific	NTT Docomo · KDDI · SoftBank · SK Telecom · KT · Jio · Airtel · Singtel
MEA	e& (Etisalat) · STC · MTN · Vodacom

SNOs, constellations & device ecosystem

LANE	NAMED PLAYERS
LEO broadband	SpaceX (Starlink) · Amazon (Kuiper) · Eutelsat OneWeb · Telesat
D2D / smartphone NTN	AST SpaceMobile · Globalstar · Iridium · Omnispace
GEO / MEO	SES · Intelsat · Viasat · EchoStar/DISH
Open RAN	Ericsson · Nokia · Mavenir · Rakuten Symphony · NEC · Fujitsu

SECTION IV · ECOSYSTEM WHO'S WHO (CONTINUED)

Chipsets, handsets & collaborations

Chipset suppliers & handset OEMs

LAYER	CATEGORY	NAMED PLAYERS
Chipset	Cellular modem leaders	Qualcomm · MediaTek (phone + wearables/IoT-NTN) · Samsung LSI
	OEM-integrated silicon	Apple (in-house) · Google (Tensor)
	IoT / module	Sequans · Quectel · Telit Cinterion · u-blox · Fibocom
Handset	Global tier-1	Apple · Samsung · Google (Pixel)
	APAC volume	Xiaomi · OPPO · vivo · Honor · Transsion
	Americas / enterprise	Motorola · TCL · Nokia (HMD)

Partnerships status (public)

PARTNERSHIP	STATUS
Apple ↔ Globalstar	Live — Emergency SOS on iPhone (Globalstar today; Amazon Leo transition announced Apr 2026)
T-Mobile ↔ SpaceX	Live — Direct to Cell / T-Satellite
AT&T ↔ AST SpaceMobile	Ongoing — commercial agreement, pilots/commercial rollout
MediaTek	Ongoing — public NR-NTN trials/demos (e.g. with satellite partners)
Samsung LSI	Ongoing — public NR-NTN demos (e.g. with test vendors)
Qualcomm ↔ Iridium (Snapdragon Satellite)	Ended Dec 2023 — announced 2023 for Android satellite messaging; no OEM devices launched

Alliances & standards bodies

ALLIANCE	NTN / 6G ROLE
3GPP	Rel-19 NTN Ph3 · Rel-21 6G (TSG#112, Jun 2026) · TR 38.914
O-RAN Alliance	Open RAN testing & interoperability
GSMA · NGMN · 5GAA · GSA	Operator requirements · V2X · ecosystem tracking
GCF · PTCRB	Device NTN certification
ITU-R · ETSI	IMT-2030 · regional standards

Wireless T&M ecosystem (selected): Keysight · Rohde & Schwarz · Anritsu · Viavi · LitePoint · NI · plus field-native innovators (e.g. private 5G / NTN test startups).

SECTION V · BUYER & ECOSYSTEM MAP

Who funds field-native validation — post-Rel-19

SEGMENT	PRIMARY RISK OWNER	EVIDENCE REQUIRED (2026–2028)
NTN operator / MNO	VP Engineering · Network ops	Rel-19 Phase 3 pilot proof: handover, store-and-forward, TN–NTN mobility, partner interoperability
Chipset / modem supplier	RF systems · Modem PL · Certification	GCF/PTCRB NTN conformance (Qualcomm · MediaTek · Samsung LSI); release-stacked regression across smartphone and IoT-NTN tiers; OEM reference sign-off
Handset OEM	Product · RF · Carrier engineering	Radiated NTN supplement; MNO SKU acceptance; launch parity vs. Apple/Samsung D2D
Constellation / satellite integrator	Payload · Gateway engineering	Regenerative payload behavior, UE-to-UE satellite paths, GNSS-independent positioning trials
Open RAN integrator	Systems integration · SLA	Multi-vendor stack under live NTN traffic; O-RAN test alignment with ephemeris-aware scenarios
6G / national research lab	PI · Program office	Reproducible trial data for Rel-21 study items; publishable methodology ahead of Stage-1 freeze (Mar 2027)
Industrial private 5G	Plant engineering · OT/IT	Campus + satellite backhaul (mobile gNB/WAB); latency/jitter for control loops

Three questions every segment asks

1. Can validation run **where the system deploys**, across TN and NTN, not only in your facility?
2. Can engineers see **causal correlation during the trial** — including release/feature context?
3. Can partners **replay scenarios** as 3GPP moves from Rel-19 deployment to Rel-21 6G normative work?

Ecosystem note: NGMN, 5GAA, and cross-domain programs (automotive V2X, maritime, aviation) treat NTN as a system-of-systems problem. Open scenario descriptors — not black-box scores — accelerate trust as Singapore's APAC hub role grows for standards and field trials.

SECTION VI · AUTHOR & REFERENCES

About this brief

This v3 synthesis updates the May 2026 brief with public outcomes from **3GPP TSG#112 (Singapore, 8–12 June 2026)** and finalized **Release 19 NTN Phase 3** specifications (per 3GPP Rel-19 summary, 2026). Distilled from *The 6G Sovereign Framework* — an independent architecture audit on 6G as system-of-systems (Ronna-X, 2026). Offered as peer research for technical and commercial discussion — not engineering specification, investment advice, or product documentation.

Hervé Oudin — 15+ years advanced-technology BD and solution marketing. Keysight Technologies (2012–2026): Sr Manager PMM/GTM (2022–2026) on SDV edge validation, digital twin, and cellular device-layer portfolios; earlier 5G OSP/MNO and IoT Program Office roles (2018–2022) — connected-device and wearable-adjacent IoT characterization. IEEE contributor (5G mmWave MIMO). Founder, Ronna-X LLC. Houston metro · US permanent resident.

Selected public references

- 3GPP TSG#112 plenary outcomes — Singapore, 8–12 June 2026 (3gpp.org/news-events/3gpp-news/tsg112)
- 3GPP Release 21 timeline — RP-260868 / SP-260595 / CP-261259 (approved TSG#112, June 2026)
- 3GPP TR 38.914 — 6G scenarios and requirements (approved TSG#112)
- 3GPP Rel-19 Summary — NTN Phase 3, 5GSAT Phase 3 (2026)
- 3GPP TR 38.821 — Solutions for NR to support non-terrestrial networks
- ITU-R M.2160 — Framework and overall objectives of IMT-2030 (6G)
- ETSI / O-RAN Alliance — open RAN testing and interoperability specifications

Contact: linkedin.com/in/herveoudin · herveoudin69@icloud.com · (707) 228-9109
Full 6G architecture audit available on request. Independent practice — not affiliated with prior employers or any vendor named in outreach context.