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Boeing (NYSE: BA) announces the first Delta II launch after the merger with McDonnell Douglas for Aug. 17 from Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), Calif.

The Delta II carrying five IRIDIUM® System Satellites will launch during a five-second window which opens at 5:55:30 p.m. PDT.

"The Delta II launch team continues to work with IRIDIUM and shares their goal of providing worldwide mobile telecommunications service by late 1998," said Darryl Van Dorn, director of NASA and Commercial Programs. "As part of Boeing, we remain focused on providing our customers with the products and services they have come to expect from us."

This is the third five-satellite payloads for Delta II this year. The first was launched on May 5, followed by a launch on July 9. There are now 17 IRIDIUM System Satellites in orbit.

Because Delta is placing the 66 satellites of the IRIDIUM constellation into six different orbital planes, the launch site must be directly below the position of the plane the satellites will occupy. The accuracy required for IRIDIUM missions means Boeing engineers must plan to launch the Delta II within a five-second window.

The IRIDIUM system will provide a satellite-based wireless personal communications network capable of sending transmissions to and from virtually anywhere on Earth, at any time. McDonnell Douglas signed a contract with Motorola in 1994 for eight Delta II launches through the year 1998. A year later, the companies signed a separate, but related operations and maintenance contract for five additional Delta II launches between April 1998 and June 2001.

This is the fifth Delta II flight of 1997. The Delta launch manifest lists firm commitments for 21 Delta II and eight Delta III launches before the year 2000.

Delta III is the next generation of launch vehicles produced at Huntington Beach, and was designed to meet the needs of the growing commercial launch business. Delta III will make its maiden flight in the spring of 1998.

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MEDIA CREDENTIALS AND ACCESS

Media representatives planning to cover the launch from the press site should fax a letter on affiliation letterhead to the Vandenberg Air Force Base Public Affairs Office, fax (805) 734-8232, ext. 6-8303; phone (805) 734-8232, ext. 6-3595. The letter should include name, affiliation and phone number.

If you are not a U.S. citizen and wish to cover the launch, please contact the U.S. Air Force Public Affairs Office at VAFB for additional requirements.

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