Delta II Launch Continues to Build Satellite Constellation

A Boeing Delta II expendable launch vehicle stands poised at Vandenberg Air Force Base (VAFB), Calif. to place five more IRIDIUM® system satellites into orbit.

The launch, which has a five-second window, is scheduled for no earlier than Sept. 26, at 6:23:36 p.m. PDT. To date, the Delta II has successfully launched 15 IRIDIUM satellites in three previous launches on May 5, July 9 and Aug. 20. The upcoming mission will bring the total number of satellites in this system to 34.

In August, two Delta II rockets successfully carried their payloads into space within five days of each other, using facilities at VAFB and Cape Canaveral Air Station, Fla. The missions included the launch of five IRIDIUM system satellites and the launch of NASA's Advanced Composition Explorer on Aug. 20 and Aug. 25, respectively, demonstrating the company's ability to meet customers' delivery requirements. Both IRIDIUM and NASA had extremely tight windows of opportunity for their flights.

In six successful launches this year, Delta II rockets have put 18 spacecraft into orbit. Boeing will launch the majority of the satellites comprising the IRIDIUM constellation, playing a significant role in reaching Iridium's goal of providing worldwide mobile telecommunications service by June of next year.

The lessons learned, and much of the technology developed in the highly successful Delta II program, will contribute directly to the next two generations of Boeing Delta launch vehicles, the Delta III and Delta IV family. The Delta III, which Boeing developed specifically for the commercial market, is on schedule for its maiden flight in early 1998. The Delta IV family is the Boeing entrant in the U.S. Air Force's Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) competition. The Air Force will down-select to one EELV contractor in June 1998.

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