Satellite, Delta II Rocket Makes it All-Boeing Launch to Keep U.S. Air Force Global Positioning System Operational

A replenishment satellite built by The Boeing Company for the U.S. Air Force's Global Position System (GPS) was carried into orbit today aboard the aerospace company's Delta II expendable launch vehicle.

The Delta II lifted off the pad at 7:30 p.m. EST from Cape Canaveral Air Station and placed the NAVSTAR IIA satellite into a transfer orbit with an apogee of 10,988 nautical miles and 100 miles at its perigree. The satellite then propels itself to its orperational orbit of nearly 11,000 nautical miles. It is the second successful launch this year of a GPS replacement satellite.

Both the satellite, a NAVSTAR Block IIA, and the Delta II 7925 expendable launch vehicle were built by The Boeing Company. The satellite became the fourth replacement for the Air Force's space-based radio navigation system that provides U.S. and allied land, sea and air forces and commercial users with worldwide three-dimensional prosition and velocity information.

"This week's successful launch of GPS Satellite II-28 marks the end of a chapter for the Cape Canaveral Air Station Delta launch team," said Lt. Col. Mike Pope, 1st Space Launch Squadron Operations officer. "This was the nineteenth and final Boeing North American Block IIA satellite to be launched by Team Delta," he explained.

"I'm extremely pleased to be affiliated with such a superb group of professionals including the Boeing booster and spacecraft personnel and the many support contractors," Lieutenant Colonel Pope continued. "The dedicated efforts of both our contractors and our Air Force and civilian members from the 1st Space Launch Squadron will ensure that through the GPS constellation, we continue to provide high precision navigation and targeting to our war-fighting forces for decades to come."

"The credit for the world's premiere navigation system belongs to the U.S. Air Force," said Walt Wilson, director, U.S. Air Force Delta programs. "Building the GPS satellite and Delta II rocket for this replenishment mission is Boeing's proud contribution," he added.

"Although today's launch was the last of the Block IIA satellites, in 2002 we will start replenishing the system with Boeing Block IIF satellites," said Rich Arras, Boeing GPS program director. "We look forward to continuing our role in support of the U.S. Air Force."

Many uses for the GPS have developed, ranging from highly accurate mapping and geological terrain surveys to surface navigation for trucks and boats.

The Block II-A satellites were built by Boeing in Seal Beach, Calif. Major components of the Delta II were built at Huntington Beach, Calif., with final assembly in the Boeing facility at Pueblo, Colo.

Between February 1989 and March 1994, Delta II rockets successfully launched all 24 of the original GPS satellites establishing the constellation that operates today. GPS was declared fully operational in April 1994. The Boeing Delta II was declared the first fully operational launch vehicle at that time. Since 1994 the Delta II has lauched four GPS-IIA replenishment satellites and the first GPS-IIR satellites. Delta II will launch GPS-IIR replenishment satellites for the Air Force, as needed, through the year 2002.

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