Boeing Delta II Places Satellites for Iridium System Into Orbit

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta II rocket lifted off the launch pad today at 2:13 p.m. PDT and successfully placed five Iridium system satellites into low-Earth orbit.

"Today's launch marks the tenth in a series of missions by Boeing for Motorola, builder of the Iridium system satellites," said Darryl Van Dorn, Boeing director of NASA and commercial Delta programs. "The Iridium system is the largest commercial satellite constellation ever launched by Boeing," he added.

Since May 1997, Boeing Delta II rockets have carried 50 Iridium telecommunications satellites into orbit. During that time, 10 of the 19 missions flown by Delta rockets were for the Iridium system.

The Iridium system is a global wireless communications network that will combine the worldwide reach of 66 low-Earth orbit satellites with land- based wireless systems to enable subscribers to communicate with hand-held telephones and pagers virtually anywhere in the world.

Boeing builds the 125-foot-high Delta II 7920 rocket in Huntington Beach, Calif., while its Canoga Park, Calif., facility produces the Rocketdyne RS-27 first-stage main engine. Final assembly takes place at the Boeing facility in Pueblo, Colo. The Delta launch team at Vandenberg Air Force Base handles launch coordination and operations for the Iridium missions.

Alliant Techsystems, Magna, Utah, builds the graphite epoxy motors for boost assist. Aerojet, Sacramento, Calif., builds the second-stage engine, and AlliedSignal, Teterboro, N.J., builds the guidance and flight control system.

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