Boeing Delta II to Launch Mars Polar Lander and Deep Space 2

The Boeing [NYSE:BA] Delta team will ring in the new year by launching the Mars Polar Lander and Deep Space 2 spacecraft for NASA.

The Delta II rocket will lift off from Space Launch Complex 17B at Cape Canaveral Air Station, Fla. on Jan. 3, 1999. The launch window is at 3:21 p.m. EST.

The missions follow the Dec. 11 Delta launch, which sent NASA's Mars Climate Orbiter on a 10-month journey to the Red Planet. Over the years, Delta rockets have successfully placed into orbit an impressive number of scientific payloads, sending planetary spacecraft to the farthest reaches of our solar system.

The Mars Polar Lander and Deep Space 2 launch represent the 77th scientific and technology development launch for the Delta family of rockets. Since 1960 Delta rockets have carried scientific and technology development payloads into space with a 98 percent launch success rate. Delta rockets sent Mars Pathfinder and Mars Global Surveyor to the Red Planet in 1996. "This year, Boeing Delta rockets have lifted Deep Space 1 and Mars Climate Orbiter into space as part of the NASA Medium-Light Expendable Launch Vehicle Services program," said Darryl Van Dorn, Boeing director of NASA and commercial programs. "Mars Polar Lander is the third in this 10-mission launch program for NASA," Van Dorn added. In addition, Delta launch vehicles will carry the NASA spacecraft Stardust, Landsat-7, FUSE, and EO-1/SAC-C into space next year.

Both the Mars Polar Lander and Deep Space 2 spacecraft will travel 11 months through deep space to land next December on an uncharted area near the south pole of Mars.

Mars Polar Lander will spend three months digging for traces of water beneath the frozen surface of Mars and will search for evidence of a physical record of climate change. A miniature microphone will permit scientists to record 10-second sound bytes of natural sounds from the planet.

Deep Space 2 is comprised of two microprobes designed to penetrate the surface of Mars and collect samples for testing the water vapor content of the planet's subterranean soil. In addition, Deep Space 2 will validate the ability of small probes loaded with sensitive, miniaturized instruments to analyze the terrain of planets and moons throughout the solar system.

The missions are managed by the NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif. Lockheed Martin Astronautics, Denver, Colo., built both spacecraft.

The Delta II is manufactured in Huntington Beach, Calif., with final assembly in Pueblo, Colo., and is powered by the RS-27A engine built by Boeing in Canoga Park, Calif. The Delta launch team at Cape Canaveral Air Station will handle launch coordination and operations.

Alliant Techsystems, Magna, Utah, builds the graphite epoxy motors for boost assist. Aerojet, Sacramento, Calif., manufactures the second-stage engine; Cordant Technologies, Elkton, Md., supplies the upper-stage engine; and AlliedSignal, Teterboro, N.J., builds the guidance and flight control system.

Mars Polar Lander Media Kit

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