Boeing Delta II Launches NASA's STARDUST Spacecraft

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta II rocket lifted off the pad today at 4:04 p.m. EST, carrying NASA's STARDUST spacecraft on the first phase of a seven-year round-trip mission to the stars and back.

The event marked the 78th Delta launch of a scientific technology payload since 1961, and the fourth NASA-sponsored payload Boeing has launched in the last five months.

Now that the STARDUST spacecraft has been successfully deployed, scientists will continue to monitor progress on its mission objective: To collect cometary dust from the comet known as Wild 2 and interstellar dust for return to Earth. Additionally, photographs and dust analysis will be performed during the spacecraft fly-by of comet Wild 2.

Upon mission completion, it will mark the first NASA mission to collect extraterrestrial material from outside the orbit of the Moon.

"In the last five months we've been a part of NASA missions to Mars, to the edge of the universe, and points in between," said Darryl Van Dorn, Boeing director of commercial and NASA Delta programs. "These programs represent such an exciting time for space exploration, and we're proud that they are beginning their missions atop a Delta rocket."

The STARDUST spacecraft was launched aboard a Delta II, a medium capacity expendable launch vehicle derived from the Delta family of rockets built and launched since 1960. The Delta II rocket 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. Launch coordination and operations for the NASA mission was provided by the Delta launch team at Cape Canaveral Air Station.

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.

STARDUST Media Kit

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