Sea Launch Completes Final Integrated Tests; Latest Round of Testing Verifies Readiness for First Launch

The most significant milestone to date for the Sea Launch program is now complete, the international joint venture said today. The conclusion of a successful series of integrated tests off the California Coast verifies the readiness of both the marine and rocket segments for the company's inaugural launch later this month.

The integrated tests, conducted near San Clemente Island, approximately 50 miles southwest of Long Beach, included extensive testing of all elements associated with conducting an actual launch from the two uniquely crafted vessels.

"We are extremely pleased with this latest round of tests conducted on both the assembly and command ship and our launch platform," said Bo Bejmuk, vice president and general manager for the Sea Launch Home Port.

The next program milestones include final preparations for the first launch, departure from the Home Port here, and an 11-day voyage to the launch site on the equator near Christmas Island, approximately 1,400 miles south of Hawaii. The inaugural launch is scheduled to occur later this month. The launch of the demonstration payload will confirm the full operational status of the Sea Launch system. Commercial operations are expected to begin later this year.

"During integrated testing, we successfully performed every aspect of our day-of-launch operations to within launch minus four minutes (L-minus 4) for flight systems and to launch plus ten minutes (L-plus 10) for ground systems. Our next step is to conduct final evaluation checks at Home Port and then all systems are go for first launch," Bejmuk added.

The entire test sequence spanned 16 days and allowed the actual day-of-launch team to conduct a dry run of hardware and software for the Sea Launch system including a countdown rehearsal and automated rollout and fueling of the rocket that will be used for the historic first launch. As part of their launch day preparation, Sea Launch personnel also performed individual practice loadings of kerosene and liquid oxygen (LOX) into the rocket, concluding with a full countdown and the simultaneous loading of LOX and kerosene.

All individual subsystems and launch support systems onboard Sea Launch Commander, the assembly & command ship, and Odyssey, the launch platform, have been extensively tested. Both vessels have since returned to the Home Port in Long Beach and final preparation, including the disassembly, inspection and retesting of the rocket, is underway.

Sea Launch is an international partnership that will perform the first commercial satellite launch from a self-propelled platform at sea by placing a simulated satellite into orbit. Launching from the equator allows Sea Launch to take full advantage of maximum booster capability and the Earth's rotational forces to place heavier payloads into orbit.

The Sea Launch partnership, which has customer contracts for 16 launches, includes:

- Boeing Commercial Space Company of Seattle, Wash., responsible for construction of the Home Port, customer marketing and support, payload accommodations, spacecraft integration and mission operations.
- Kvaerner Maritime a.s. based in London, UK, responsible for the two vessels and all maritime operations.
- RSC Energia of Korolev, Russia, just outside Moscow, responsible for the Block DM-SL upper stage rocket, launch vehicle integration, automated launch processing equipment and launch support.
- KB Yuzhnoye/PO Yuzhmash of Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, responsible for providing the first two stages of the Sea Launch Zenit-3SL rocket and launch operations support.

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