Boeing Delta II Launches Landsat-7 Spacecraft

A spacecraft that will be used by scientists to study changes here on Earth was carried into orbit today to become the 198th NASA mission aboard a Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta rocket.

A Delta II lifted off the launch pad at 11:32 a.m. PDT, carrying the Landsat-7 Earth-imaging spacecraft into orbit. It is the seventh NASA-sponsored payload Boeing has launched in the last eight months, and marks the 198th NASA spacecraft the company has launched since 1961.

"This launch marks 40 years of collaboration by Boeing and NASA to explore the vastness of space, and planets near and far," said Darryl Van Dorn, Boeing director of commercial and NASA Delta programs. "We're proud to partner with NASA on the Landsat-7 mission which will provide valuable information on a planet everyone can relate to -- Earth."

An hour and two minutes after liftoff, Landsat-7 separated from the upper stage of the Delta II to insert itself into a sun-synchronous orbit more than 400 miles above the Earth.

Landsat-7 is the latest in a series of Earth-imaging spacecraft carried aboard Delta launch vehicles and is a joint program with NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey. The satellite continues the 26-year flow of global change information to the scientific community and commercial users worldwide.

Data from Landsat is used for monitoring global deforestation and fire damage, estimating soil moisture and snow water equivalence, and monitoring flood, storm, earthquake and volcanic eruption damage. Additional applications include studies of tropical deforestation, timber losses in the U.S. Pacific Northwest, soil moisture and snow water. Landsats also have been used to monitor population changes in and around metropolitan areas, and by fast food restaurants to estimate community growth sufficient to warrant a franchise.

The Landsat-7 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 Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

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

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