Boeing Readies Space Shuttle to Launch Chandra Observatory for NASA

On the dawn of the 30th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission that sent humans to the moon, the men and women of The Boeing Company [NYSE: BA] are helping NASA forge yet another chapter in the history of space exploration.

The primary goal of the STS-93 mission will be to place the Chandra X-ray Observatory -- the most sophisticated space telescope ever built -- in an elliptical orbit that at apogee, will extend more than one-third of the way to the moon. The payload will be carried aboard Space Shuttle Columbia, scheduled for liftoff at 12:36 a.m. EDT July 20.

The mission will be commanded by U.S. Air Force Colonel Eileen Collins, the first woman to lead a Space Shuttle mission.

Chandra's final elliptical orbit will be 6,210 x 86,940 miles. Once operational from its distant vantage point, Chandra will obtain X-ray images of deep space objects with a 10- to 100-fold increase in resolution from previous space-based X-ray imagery. The data collected will greatly enhance our understanding of the structure and evolution of the universe.

The entire STS-93 mission features extensive human and flight element participation from across Boeing. Boeing designed and built the Columbia Orbiter and its unique liquid-fueled reusable main engines. The Chandra Observatory will be boosted into its transfer orbit by the Boeing-built Inertial Upper Stage (IUS) approximately seven hours after launch. Boeing engineers and technicians at Kennedy Space Center, Fla., processed the 45-foot long cylindical Chandra telescope for launch.

"All of us at Boeing are excited and proud about our contributions to space exploration, whether it's manned initiatives like Apollo or the launch of a state-of-the-art scientific instrument like Chandra," said Jim Albaugh, president of Boeing Space & Communications Group. "Our commitment to safety, quality, and efficiency in space exploration efforts remains unchanged after 30 years."

The IUS/Chandra payload combination of 50,000 pounds is the heaviest payload yet to be deployed from the Shuttle.

The Boeing-built Space Shuttle is the world's most capable, reliable and reusable launch system and the world's heaviest-lift launch vehicle currently in operation.

Boeing is also a major subcontractor for United Space Alliance (USA) for Space Shuttle Orbiter maintenance, modifications/upgrades, operations, ongoing engineering support and overall Shuttle system and payload integration services -- with additional responsibility for launch and mission support.

Today, Boeing is working together with NASA and USA to upgrade the Shuttle, to improve safety and reliability, lower program costs and enhance performance.

The IUS, is a two-stage payload delivery vehicle that is compatible with both the Space Shuttle and the Titan IV expendable launch vehicle. Since its first launch in 1982, the IUS has delivered payloads to interplanetary trajectories and geosynchronous and elliptical Earth orbits for its U.S. Air Force and NASA customers.

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