Sea Launch First Commercial Mission Scheduled For Oct. 10; Vessels Set to Depart for Ocean Launch Site

The launch of the first commercial satellite from a floating platform at sea will take place on Sunday, Oct. 10, 1999, Sea Launch Company announced today.

A 200-foot Sea Launch rocket will lift the 7,600 pound DIRECTV 1-R direct broadcast satellite, built by Hughes Space & Communications Company, into geostationary transfer orbit from an equatorial ocean site at 154 Degrees West, Zero Degree North. The launch window opens at 8:28 p.m.* Pacific Daylight Time.

"There's no question that this launch is significant for Sea Launch and for the entire launch services industry," said Sea Launch President Allen B. Ashby, who made the announcement at a press conference today. "Collectively, we shared in the tremendous success of our March 27 demonstration launch, but this is what we've been working toward; being in a position to offer our customers a cost-effective and reliable ride to orbit, while beginning to show a return on investment for the Sea Launch partnership."

Ashby also said that the departure of the program's assembly and command ship and launch platform from the Sea Launch Home Port is imminent. Set to depart Long Beach in the next several days is the *Sea Launch Commander*, a floating mission control center and rocket assembly factory, and the *Odyssey*, a self-propelled launch platform. Onboard the *Odyssey*, in an environmentally controlled hangar, is the Sea Launch Zenit-3SL rocket that will deliver the DIRECTV 1-R satellite to space. Transit of both vessels, from the Long Beach Home Port to the equator, is expected to take approximately 10-11 days.

Upon arrival at the launch site, the *Odyssey* will be partially submerged for additional stability. The Sea Launch rocket will then be withdrawn from its hangar, lifted into a vertical position, fueled with kerosene and liquid oxygen, and launched via remote control from the *Sea Launch Commander*. Prior to the start of the automated fueling process, the *Odyssey* crew will be transferred to the *Sea Launch Commander* and transported approximately three miles away. DIRECTV 1-R is a Hughes HS 601HP satellite, a body-stabilized model and the 50th in the HS 601 family to be launched. It features more than 7.5 kilowatts of total power, to operate 16 high-power Ku-band transponders for service to all 50 states. Besides building the satellite, Hughes arranged for the launch services in order to deliver the spacecraft in orbit.

"The launch of DIRECTV 1-R is a significant milestone for DIRECTV," said Eddy Hartenstein, president of DIRECTV. "Once it is operational at 101 degrees West Longitude, our primary orbital slot, DIRECTV 1-R will play a key role in expanding our capacity and delivering local broadcast network channels to DIRECTV customers in major metropolitan markets across the country. DIRECTV 1-R will also strengthen our in-orbit redundancy."

Prior to the departure from Long Beach, Sea Launch and Hughes personnel conducted an extensive series of satellite tests and launch-readiness activities, including encapsulation of the DIRECTV 1-R satellite within the fairing, and transfer of the encapsulated spacecraft from the payload processing facility to the *Sea Launch Commander*. Once onboard, the payload was successfully mated with the three-stage Sea Launch rocket and transferred to the *Odyssey* for transit to the launch site.

"We've thoroughly tested all aspects of our launch support operations on both the marine and aerospace side," said Don Carter, Sea Launch vice president of operations. "Everything from the payload and rocket to our mission support operations and vessel systems looks good. Now we simply have to perform to our capabilities once we reach the launch site."

Building on proven performance and flight-tested hardware, Sea Launch combines the world's premier aerospace and marine expertise to provide satellite and end-user customers with superior value, performance and fully integrated commercial launch service capabilities. The Sea Launch global partnership includes Boeing Commercial Space Company, Kent, Wash., (provides spacecraft integration and the payload fairings); Kvaerner Maritime a.s., of Oslo, Norway (the vessel builder); RSC Energia of Moscow, Russia (provides the Block-DM upper stage and its integration with the launch vehicle); and KB Yuzhnoye/PO Yuzhmash of Ukraine (provides the first two stages of the launch vehicle).

Sea Launch currently has firm contracts for 19 launches including the DIRECTV 1-R launch.

* denotes change from previous announcement (was 7:28 p.m.)

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