Boeing, Astrotech Partnership Marks Latest Delta IV Program Development

The Boeing Company and Astrotech Space Operations, Inc., of Titusville, Fla., have entered into a long-term partnership to support the Delta IV family of rockets, the next generation of Boeing expendable launch vehicles capable of lifting payloads up to 28,950 lbs. to geosynchronous orbit.

The 10-year agreement calls for the expansion of Astrotech's payload processing facilities to accommodate commercial satellite processing for Delta IV. Approximately 35,000 feet of floor space will be dedicated to Delta IV payload processing in a new high bay structure to be built by Astrotech at its current location. A project groundbreaking will take place Friday, Nov. 12; project completion is expected by May 2001.

Astrotech, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SPACEHAB, Inc., currently processes commercial satellites for the Boeing Delta II and Delta III programs, as well as Sea Launch, the global launch services venture in which Boeing is a partner. The significantly larger components associated with the Delta IV family of vehicles - the vehicles use fairings that measure up to 16.5 feet (5 meters) in diameter - necessitate the facilities expansion.

Services provided by Astrotech include final assembly and testing of satellites, and payload encapsulation in protective nosecones, or fairings. Following encapsulation, Boeing transports the payload to the launch site for placement atop the rocket.

"The team at Astrotech has done a great job taking care of our Delta II and Delta III customers, and knows how to meet their stringent requirements," said Mike Kennedy, Boeing EELV/Delta IV vice president. "So it made sense to stay with a team that has proven its capabilities."

Astrotech joins a worldwide, world-class team of suppliers supporting the Delta IV program. Major contracts have been signed with: Alliant TechSystems, BF Goodrich, KAMAG, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Moog, Parker Hannifin, SAAB, Spincraft Division of Standex Precision Engineering and United Technologies, and Sundstrand.

Delta IV program personnel are working closely with Astrotech to design the expanded facilities to accommodate the wide range of commercial satellites scheduled for launch aboard the Delta IV family of rockets, and to streamline processing of satellites for launch.

The agreement marks the continuation of aggressive investment in Florida's Space Coast by Boeing. The company is investing $250 million to build its Delta IV launch complex at Cape Canaveral Air Station, Fla. The site, which is the first launch complex to be built from the ground up in 30 years, is 40 percent complete and will be mission ready in 2000. Boeing plans to build an additional Delta IV launch site at Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

The Delta IV family consists of five launch vehicles to launch satellites ranging in weight from 4.5 tons to more than 14.5 tons to geosynchronous transfer orbit. First flight of the Delta IV is scheduled for 2001.

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