Boeing Delta II Launches Global Positioning Satellite for U.S. Air Force

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta II rocket today successfully replaced one of the first U.S. Air Force navigational satellites launched aboard another Delta 11 years ago.

The launch took place at 9:48 p.m. EDT from Pad A of Space Launch Complex 17 and was the 31st Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite lifted into orbit aboard a Delta rocket (excluding the Block I satellites used during the research and development phase of the GPS program). Boeing has an additional 17 launches manifested aboard the Delta II rocket for the satellite-based GPS (Block IIR satellites).

Recognized as the world's premier navigation satellite system, GPS operates via a constellation of satellites (currently 27), a ground control system, and thousands of terminals, to help locate and guide military and civilian users in the air, at sea, and on the ground. The original 24 GPS satellites and replacement satellites have been carried into orbit by Delta rockets.

"We are proud of a long-standing relationship with the U.S. Air Force," said Will Hampton, Boeing director of U.S. Air Force Delta II programs.

"In fact, Delta's origins go back to the Thor intermediate-range ballistic missile, which was developed in the mid-1950s for the Air Force," Hampton explained. "The Thor, a single-stage, liquid-fueled rocket, later was modified to become the Delta launch vehicle, which then evolved into the Delta II."

The technological evolution continues with development of the Delta III to meet the needs of the commercial launch market for larger payloads, and the Delta IV for the U.S. Air Force Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle Program (EELV). Delta IV is offered as a family of launch vehicles - Small, Medium and Heavy.

Boeing is working on design, development and production of the fourth generation of GPS satellites, the Block IIF, for the U.S. Air Force. Beginning in 2002, a number of these satellites will be launched on the Boeing Delta IV under the U.S. Air Force's EELV program.

The Delta II rocket is manufactured in Huntington Beach, Calif., with final assembly in Pueblo, Colo. The rocket is powered by the RS-27A engine built by Boeing in Canoga Park, Calif. Launch coordination and operations for this mission were provided by the Delta launch team at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. Alliant Techsystems, Magna, Utah, builds the graphite epoxy motors for boost assist; Aerojet, Sacramento, Calif., manufactures the second-stage engine; Cordant Technologies, Elkton, Md., builds the third-stage motor; and L3 Communications, Teterboro, N.J., builds the guidance and flight control system.

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Boeing Delta Web Site

For further information:
Boeing Communications
(714) 896-1301
Boeing Launch Hotline
(714) 896-4770