Sea Launch Delivers Thuraya Satellite to Orbit

Heaviest Commercial Payload Ever Launched

Sea Launch, the multinational ocean-based launch services company, successfully launched the heaviest commercial payload in history last night, the Thuraya-1 mobile communications satellite.

The Sea Launch Zenit-3SL rocket lifted off from the Odyssey Launch Platform at 10:52 p.m. PDT, from the equatorial launch site at 154 degrees West Longitude. The 11,260-pound (5,108 kg) Thuraya satellite was delivered to geosynchronous transfer orbit approximately two hours and 22 minutes after liftoff. Boeing Satellite Systems (BSS - formerly Hughes Space and Communications) built the HS-GEM model spacecraft for Thuraya Satellite Telecommunications Company, based in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

"Today's success has helped the people of three continents move into the future," said Will Trafton, president of Sea Launch. "We are delighted to have supported this significant mission. Our Zenit-3SL rocket continues to build a record of reliability and dependability. I am very proud of our team."

Following liftoff, the Russian- and Ukrainian-built launch vehicle headed downrange to the east on its ascent to geosynchronous transfer orbit. All systems onboard the three-stage rocket performed nominally. The Block DM upper stage separated from the satellite 1,388 miles above South America. BSS acquired a signal from the satellite some 22 minutes later at a ground station in Fucino, Italy.

Designed for a 12-year lifespan, the Thuraya-1 satellite will be positioned in a geosynchronous orbit, 35,786 km (22,236 miles) above the Earth at 44 degrees East Longitude, inclined at 6.3 degrees. It will provide telephone, voice mail, Interactive Voice Response, data, fax and GPS to more than 1.8 billion subscribers - covering three continents.

Sea Launch provides commercial satellite customers the most direct and cost-effective route to geosynchronous transfer orbit. From the ocean-based launch site at the Equator, the robust Sea Launch Zenit-3SL rocket can lift a heavier spacecraft mass or place a payload into a higher perigee, helping satellite operators to attain a longer satellite service capability. Preparations are already underway for the next mission, a launch for XM Satellite Radio, scheduled later this year. BSS expects to deliver the XM-1 spacecraft to Sea Launch Home Port at the end of November.

The Sea Launch partnership includes: Boeing Commercial Space Company, U.S. (spacecraft integration and the payload fairings); the Anglo-Norwegian Kvaerner Group, Norway (vessel builder); RSC Energia, Russia (Block DM Upper Stage and its integration with the launch vehicle); and SDO Yuzhnoye/PO Yuzhmash, Ukraine (first two stages of the launch vehicle and launch support operations). For more information please visit our web site.

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