Boeing Delta II Paves the Way to the Red Planet

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta II rocket roared into the sky this morning, sending NASA's Mars Odyssey spacecraft to the red planet. Liftoff from Space Launch Complex 17A occurred at 11:02 a.m. EDT.

The mission is a continuation of NASA's exploration of Mars. Due to planetary alignment, this is the first opportunity to go to Mars since January 1999.

"The 2001 Mars Odyssey mission epitomizes humankind's quest for knowledge beyond earthly bounds," said Joy Bryant, director of NASA programs for Boeing.

"The Boeing Delta program provides a safe and reliable means for NASA to extend its reach to neighboring planets and to better understand our universe."

Thirty-one minutes after the launch, at an altitude of 850 nautical miles, the spacecraft separated from the Delta II third stage and began its six-month journey to Mars.

The Delta II 7925 has nine solid rocket motors attached to the first stage. The rocket has a second stage and a 9.5-foot fairing that encloses the third stage and spacecraft.

Previous missions to Mars include Mars Pathfinder, Mars Global Surveyor, Mars Climate Orbiter, and Mars Polar Lander/Deep Space 2. Boeing will continue its role as launch service provider for NASA's future Mars missions, including the two Mars Exploration Rovers.

For more information, visit the Boeing Delta website.

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