Boeing Announces Delta IV Heavy Launch Assignment

Boeing officials have received authority from the U.S. Air Force to proceed with launch service plans for a National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) mission aboard a Boeing Delta IV Heavy launch vehicle.

The announcement was made today at the U.S. Space Foundation National Space Symposium. The launch is targeted for 2004 from Space Launch Complex 37, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla.

Details of the mission were not released, but Boeing officials confirmed the launch is part of the Air Force's Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program.

Boeing was awarded 22 of the 29 launches under the program. "Following our first successful mission for the NRO last year aboard a Delta II, our relationship with the NRO continues with the Delta IV family," said Tom Alexiou, director of Delta IV Air Force and NRO programs. "Our integration approach, mission assurance focus and teamwork with our customer were key in developing this launch service."

Two additional Delta IV Heavy launches, currently manifested for 2003, include a demonstration for the Air Force and an Air Force Defense Support Program mission.

"Boeing is currently the only EELV contractor with a Heavy vehicle in production capable of lifting the largest payloads for the EELV program," said Dave Schweikle, vice president of Boeing Delta Government Launch Services. "We're also the only contractor developing EELV launch capabilities for both the East and West Coasts."

The Boeing Delta IV Heavy is the largest of the Delta family of launch vehicles and can lift up to 13,130 kilograms (28,950 pounds) to geosynchronous transfer orbit.

It is designed with three common booster cores (CBCs) joined together. A five-meter upper stage sits on top of the core CBC with the capability of carrying either single or multiple payloads. Each CBC is powered by a Boeing-built RS-68 main engine, designed and built by the company's Rocketdyne Propulsion and Power (RPP) business. The RS-68 is the first, new large rocket engine designed and built in the U.S. since the space shuttle main engine, which is also built by Boeing RPP.

Boeing Space and Communications (S&C), headquartered in Seal Beach, Calif., is the world's largest space and communications company. A unit of The Boeing Company, S&C provides integrated solutions in launch services, human space flight and exploration, missile defense, and information and communications. It is NASA's largest contractor; a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; and a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. The global enterprise has customers worldwide and manufacturing operations throughout the United States and Australia.

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