Boeing Delivers First EELV/Delta IV Common Booster Core

Less than five years in the making, a new rocket, built by The Boeing Company [NYSE:BA] for a U.S. Air Force program designed to reduce launch costs and ensure the nation's access to space, rolled out from its facility in Decatur, Ala.

The Boeing Delta IV rocket was designed and developed as part of the Air Force's Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program, and will be used to launch the Defense Satellite Communications Systems (DSCS) III B6 spacecraft during the final quarter of this year. While this is the first Delta IV launch vehicle to support the EELV program, the first launch of the Delta IV will take place in August and place a European commercial communications satellite into orbit. The EELV program is structured to take advantage of the need for commercial launch services as well as government launches and to minimize the Air Force's cost of putting satellites into space.

"Several years ago, we made a commitment to provide the Air Force with a new launch system that would address its future needs in space," said Gale Schluter, vice president and general manager for Boeing Expendable Launch Systems. "Today we are delivering on our promise. We have invested in the nation's need for assured access to space by developing a launch system capable of carrying nearly any payload into any orbit."

The rollout ceremony took place at the Boeing Decatur facility, the most sophisticated rocket manufacturing facility in the world. Among the attendees was Col. Susan Mashiko, Systems Program Office director for EELV.

"We are looking forward to demonstrating the true dual-use nature of the Delta IV launch vehicle when this booster delivers a critical Department of Defense (DoD) communications satellite to orbit later this year," Mashiko said. "That launch will mark the beginning of a new era in DoD space launch."

Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman, who was instrumental in the successful partnership between business, community, and government, also attended this event.

"From the Saturn V rocket and the lunar rover to the International Space Station that will open new scientific horizons for all mankind, and now the Delta IV rocket, Alabama's place as a leader in the world's aerospace technology sector is firmly established," Siegelman said.

"Boeing's commitment to excellence and the strong work ethic of Alabama workers drives our partnership. I am confident that we will supply the world with the premiere launch vehicle for satellites for many years to come."

The Delta IV common booster core, which is the first stage used on all five variants of the Delta IV family of rockets, and the second stage will head to Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., this summer.

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