

Wrapping Up a Spectacular Year for Boeing Delta

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The Boeing Company [NYSE:BA] is wrapping up a spectacular year of successes for its launch business. In 2002, the Delta family of launch systems deployed six commercial and two NASA satellites. "This has been an exciting and challenging year for the entire Delta team," said Jay Witzling, vice-president and deputy Delta program manager. "We continue to demonstrate the flexibility and reliability in our Delta II, while laying out the foundation of our next-generation launch system through the successful debut of our Delta IV rocket."

Here is a recap of the year's activities, and a look at next year's events.

Delta II

On Feb. 11, the Delta team kicked off the year with its 101st Delta II mission. The rocket launched from Vandenberg Air Force Station (VAFB), Fla., five Iridium Satellite, LLC telecommunications satellites aboard a Delta II rocket. All of the satellites were placed into low-Earth orbit to within the highly accurate rating of one-sigma.

It was only three months later on May 2, that the team launched NASA on a mission to improve weather forecasting, enhance evacuation plans, and steer commercial and residential development away from storm tracks.

The Delta II lifted-off from Space Launch Complex 2 at VAFB, to safely place into orbit Aqua, an Earth-observing satellite.

To accommodate the dimensions of the Aqua spacecraft, the Delta II used a new version of the 10-foot wide composite fairing, which features a three-foot longer cylindrical section to fit larger payloads.

On July 3, the Delta II powered up its engine once more this time from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla. (CCAFS). The team launched NASA's CONTOUR, designed to study comets.

This month, NASA expressed its satisfaction and confidence in the Delta team and the Delta II "workhorse," by extending the existing NASA Launch Services contract with Boeing Launch Services. The agreement calls for 12 firm launch-service orders with options for seven additional launches to support Earth-observing and interplanetary exploration missions.

The launch services are scheduled to begin in 2006 and are manifested through 2009. If all options are exercised, the contract could be worth as much as \$1.2 billion.

Delta IV

On May 1, the Delta IV rocket was transported to Space Launch Complex (SLC) 37B in preparation for its first flight from CCAFS.

Three weeks later, on May 23, the second Delta IV first stage booster that will launch the first U.S. Air Force Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle payload in early 2003, was rolled out of the Delta rocket manufacturing facility in Decatur, Ala.

On Oct. 7, the Delta team completed its first wet-dress rehearsal in preparation for the maiden launch of the Delta IV.

On Oct. 14, the team completed the second wet-dress rehearsal, which included the flight-readiness firing of the first-flight Delta IV rocket at CCAFS. The test firing of the Boeing Rocketdyne RS-68 main engine lasted approximately five seconds. It was the last major milestone in the development of the Delta IV.

Then, on Nov. 20, four years of hard work culminated in the spectacular debut of the Delta IV rocket. On its maiden flight from SLC-37B, CCAFS, the Delta IV placed into a geosynchronous orbit, the W5 telecommunications satellite for Eutelsat S.A. of France. The accuracy of placement was within one sigma.

Looking Ahead

In 2003, the Delta family of launch systems is scheduled for 14 missions. Ten of those will be aboard the Delta II. The first mission of the year, scheduled for January, will be to deploy two primary payloads for NASA. ICESat and CHIPSat will ride aboard a Delta II rocket from VAFB. Also, the Delta team has been working diligently with USAF throughout 2002, and is honored to launch another Global Positioning System satellite for the USAF. This mission will take place also in January from CCAFS.

Of the other eight missions to be launched from both CCAFS and VAFB, the Delta II is scheduled to deploy a mix of Air Force and NASA payloads.

In the spring, Boeing will introduce the first Delta II Heavy, capable of lifting up to 4,723 lb to geosynchronous orbit. Of those nine missions to be launched from both CCAFS and VAFB, the Delta II is scheduled to deploy Air Force and NASA payloads. In the spring, Boeing will introduce the first Delta II Heavy, capable of lifting up to 4,723 lb to geosynchronous orbit.

Aside from the Delta II missions, there are four other missions aboard the Delta IV. Among those scheduled for 2003, Boeing will launch from CCAFS, the first U.S. Air Force Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle payload -- the Defense Systems Communications Satellite (DSCS) III A3. Later in the year, Delta IV will complete a second DSCS III mission.

The team will also launch from the Cape the first Delta IV Heavy configuration, which is capable of lifting up to 28,950 lb to geosynchronous orbit. And during the fourth quarter, VAFB will host its first Delta IV mission and launch a satellite for the National Reconnaissance Office.

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Check out the Boeing Delta web site.

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