Boeing Launches NASA Spacecraft that will Observe 'Black Hole' Formations

A Boeing [NYSE: BA] Delta II rocket delivered to orbit today a NASA spacecraft that will monitor the afterglow of explosions in space.

The Swift observatory, named for its ability to swiftly maneuver and point its instruments, will monitor gamma-ray bursts that are believed to cause the formation of black holes in space. Swift was launched by a Delta II 7320-10C vehicle. Lift-off occurred at 12:17 p.m. EST from Space Launch Complex 17A, Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla.

Following an 80-minute flight, the Delta II placed Swift in a circular orbit approximately 600 kilometers above the Earth to complete the mission.

"Swift is an exciting science mission that will help bridge the connection between the mysterious explosions that occur in space and the black holes they leave behind," said Dan Collins, vice president, Boeing Expendable Launch Systems. "Our Delta team did an outstanding job in preparing for this mission, including overcoming challenges associated with the recent hurricanes in Florida. We're proud that NASA continues to place its confidence in the Delta II and our launch team in achieving its science goals."

Swift utilizes three onboard telescopes that can quickly identify and monitor the multi-wavelength afterglow activity of gamma-ray bursts, believed to cause black holes to form. A black hole is believed to form in space once a day.

Swift will capture the aftermath of a gamma-ray burst within 20 to 75 seconds of its occurrence. It will then send back the data to Earth where scientists can monitor the afterglow in its duration, analyze the data, and make it available almost immediately.

The Swift mission is a consortium of international technical organizations and academia, and is managed by NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt , Md.

The Delta II 7320-10C vehicle that launched Swift featured a Boeing Rocketdyne RS-27A main engine, three Alliant Techsystems solid rocket boosters, an Aerojet AJ10-118K second-stage engine and a 10-foot diameter Boeing composite payload fairing.

The next Delta launch is the inaugural flight of the Delta IV Heavy vehicle for the U.S. Air Force EELV program, which is currently planned for December.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses. Headquartered in St. Louis , Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $27 billion business. It provides network-centric system solutions to its global military, government, and commercial customers. It is a leading provider of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems; the world's largest military aircraft manufacturer; the world's largest satellite manufacturer and a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense and Department of Homeland Security; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in launch services.

###

For further information:
Robert Villanueva
Boeing Expendable Launch Systems
(714) 372-2089 Office
robert.s.villanueva@boeing.com
Doug Shores
Boeing Expendable Launch Systems
(256) 432-1127 Office
doug.shores@boeing.com