Boeing Completes First Delta IV West Coast Launch

Boeing [NYSE: BA] completed the first flight of a Delta IV rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., today with the successful launch of the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) satellite, NROL-22. The launch is the first West Coast mission completed for the U.S. Air Force Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program.

Liftoff of the Delta IV Medium+ (4, 2) configuration vehicle occurred at 8:33 p.m. PDT from Space Launch Complex (SLC) 6. The payload was successfully deployed approximately 54 minutes later.

"This first Delta IV launch from Vandenberg is an important achievement for Boeing and our NRO and Air Force customers," said Dan Collins, vice president of Boeing Launch Systems. "Today we successfully validated launching the Delta IV from SLC-6, providing the Air Force and the nation with the first operational West Coast launch site for the EELV program. With this launch, the Delta team has fulfilled all the EELV requirements outlined by the Air Force. We have a full family of launch vehicles, including a flight-proven, heavy-lift vehicle, a domestically produced first stage engine and now fully operational launch sites on both coasts."

SLC-6 is the West Coast launch site for the Boeing Delta IV family of launch vehicles that provides the Air Force the strategic capability to launch national security satellites to polar, Sun-synchronous and high-inclination orbits. The new launch site can support all five configurations of the Delta IV family.

Today's mission is the first for the NRO aboard a Delta IV and the second aboard a Delta rocket. The first was the GeoLITE mission in 2001 aboard a Delta II.

The 132-acre SLC-6 features structures similar to Boeing's Delta IV SLC-37 launch site at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla., with a Fixed Umbilical Tower, Mobile Service Tower, Fixed Pad Erector, Launch Control Center and Operations Building, and a Horizontal Integration Facility. SLC-6 also features a Mobile Assembly Shelter that protects the rocket from adverse weather.

Launch vehicle hardware is transported from the Boeing factory in Decatur, Ala., to Vandenberg via the Delta Mariner ship that docks just south of SLC-6.

The next Delta IV launch from Vandenberg is planned for late 2006 aboard a Delta IV Medium vehicle that will fly a mission for the Air Force Defense Meteorological Satellite Program, DMSP-17.

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 $30.8 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; a foremost developer of advanced concepts and technologies; a leading provider of space-based communications; the primary systems integrator for U.S. missile defense; NASA's largest contractor; and a global leader in sustainment solutions and launch services.
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