Boeing Advanced Military Satellite Begins On-Orbit Checkout

Boeing [NYSE: BA] has acquired signals from the first Wideband Global SATCOM (WGS) satellite, a new military spacecraft that will help meet the growing demand for military satellite communications by providing a 10-fold increase in telecommunications capacity over the satellite it will replace.

The satellite -- the first of five that Boeing is building for the U.S. Air Force -- was successfully launched at 8:22 p.m. Eastern on Oct. 10 by a United Launch Alliance Atlas V vehicle from Cape Canaveral Air Force Base, Fla. Following a nominal 45-minute flight, the launch vehicle's upper stage deployed the spacecraft, and a ground station in Dongara, Australia received the satellite's first signals 47 minutes later at 9:09 p.m. Eastern. Boeing controllers in El Segundo, Calif., confirmed that the satellite is healthy.

"This successful launch and spacecraft acquisition represents the culmination of tremendous teamwork by our U.S. Air Force customer, The Aerospace Corporation and The Boeing Company," said Howard Chambers, vice president and general manager, Boeing Space and Intelligence Systems. "The military's demand for communications capabilities is increasing exponentially, and this WGS satellite, along with the others in the series, will provide critical communications services to the warfighters who will depend on its services."

Following a series of orbital maneuvers and in-orbit testing, the satellite is expected to begin Air Force service during the first quarter of 2008

The WGS series of satellites will augment and eventually replace the Defense Satellite Communication System constellation as well as the Global Broadcast Service function currently provided by the U.S. Navy's Ultra High Frequency Follow-On satellites, which were built by Boeing. It also will reduce the U.S. government's reliance on commercial satellite communications services.

WGS is a Boeing 702 spacecraft that operates at both X-band and Ka-band frequencies, and provides many important operational features that are not available from any other MILSATCOM system. For example, WGS has 18 reconfigurable coverage areas and the ability to broadcast or multicast transmissions into the various coverage areas and connect users between any and all coverage areas even when operating on different frequency bands.

Boeing is the leading provider of government and commercial communications satellites. Boeing designs and manufactures the Wideband Global SATCOM satellites at its satellite factory in El Segundo, Calif.

A unit of The Boeing Company, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is one of the world's largest space and defense businesses specializing in innovative and capabilities-driven customer solutions. Headquartered in St. Louis, Boeing Integrated Defense Systems is a $32.4 billion business with 72,000 employees worldwide.
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