Lockheed Martin-Built Titan IV Rocket Launches From Cape Canaveral

36th Mission for Nation's Most Powerful Booster

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CAPE CANAVERAL AIR FORCE STATION, Fla.

A Lockheed Martin-built Titan IV B rocket lifted off this morning at 12:29 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time carrying a classified payload for the U.S. Air Force and the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO). The NRO is the U.S. government agency responsible for reconnaissance satellites. The launch was from Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station (CCAFS), Fla.

This morning's launch marked a significant milestone for the Titan program with the final flight of the Centaur upper stage to be used with Titan IV.

This was the 36th Titan IV launch overall. Eleven Titan IVs have been launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., and 25 from CCAFS. Titan IV, the nation's largest and most powerful expendable launch vehicle, is built by Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company in Denver, Colo. The Titan IV B is capable of boosting payloads weighing 38,800 pounds into low-Earth polar orbit, 47,800 pounds into low-Earth equatorial orbit, or more than 12,700 pounds into geosynchronous orbit.

Notable Titan/Centaur Missions:

Titan III/Centaur/Vikings 1 and 2: Twin spacecraft to Mars began their trips with a boost to space by Titan III/Centaur launch vehicles in 1975. Launched only weeks apart, Vikings 1 and 2 were the first missions to land spacecraft safely on the surface of the Red Planet. The two landers continued to send back photographs and other scientific data until the early 1980s, paving the way for continued Mars exploration throughout the 1990s and into the future.

Titan III/Centaur/Voyagers 1 and 2: Voyagers 1 and 2 were launched in August and September of 1977 aboard Titan III/Centaur launch vehicles. The Voyager mission is now in its 26th year on a quest to explore the outermost regions of our solar system. During their missions, the Voyagers have provided close fly-bys of Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Voyager 1 is now the most distant human-made object in the universe and Voyager 2 is close behind.

Titan IV/Centaur/Cassini: Launched in October 1997, Cassini is on its way to the planet Saturn with a scheduled arrival and entry into orbit in July 2004. The Jet Propulsion Laboratory calls the Cassini mission the most ambitious effort in planetary space exploration ever mounted. Cassini will orbit the ringed planet and study the Saturnian system in detail over a four-year period. On its way to Saturn, Cassini has flown by Jupiter and Venus to borrow gravitational energy. Also on the way to Saturn, Cassini will send the Huygens probe to the surface of Saturn's moon Titan.

Titan IV/Centaur/Milstar: Titan IV and Centaur have successfully launched five Milstar satellites, the Defense Department's most technologically advanced telecommunications satellite system. Milstar provides critical and secure links to our country's leaders as well as air, land and sea forces around the globe. The 10,000-lb. passenger-bus-sized Milstar satellite requires the heavy-lift capability of the Titan IV/Centaur system.

Lockheed Martin is under contract to the U.S. Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center, El Segundo, Calif., to complete the launch of 39 vehicles. As prime contractor and systems integrator, the company builds the first and second stages and provides launch services. Titan IV, the nation's heavy-lift workhorse, provides the principal access to space for critical national security payloads launched from both coasts.

Other members of the Titan IV contractor team and their responsibilities include: GenCorp Aerojet Propulsion Division, Sacramento, Calif., liquid rocket engines; Alliant Techsystems, Magna, Utah, solid rocket motor upgrade; The Boeing Company, Huntington Beach, Calif., payload fairing; and Honeywell Space Systems, Clearwater, Fla., advanced guidance.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 125,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2002 sales of $26.6 billion.

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