Newest Lockheed Martin Military Weather Satellite Readied For Launch

A Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP) Block 5D-3 spacecraft, built under contract for the U.S. Air Force by Lockheed Martin is being prepared for launch on October 15, 2003. A Titan II launch vehicle, also supplied by Lockheed Martin, will carry the weather satellite into orbit from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif.

"This spacecraft -- our first full Block 5D-3 spacecraft -- is a giant step in the DMSP program," said Jeff Smith, DMSP program manager for Lockheed Martin Space Systems in Sunnyvale, Calif. "Our partnership with the Air Force extends back to the very beginning of the DMSP program with a common goal of ensuring that commanders have access to environmental data critical to the preparation and execution of military operations The Block 5D-3 brings additional capabilities to that mission."

The Block 5D-3 series accommodates larger sensor payloads than earlier generations. They also feature a larger capability power subsystem; a more powerful on-board computer with increased memory -- allowing greater spacecraft autonomy -- and increased battery capacity that prolongs the mean mission duration.

Within two hours of launch, the DMSP Early-Orbit Team at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Space Operations Control Center (SOCC) in Suitland, Md. will begin checkout of the spacecraft. The procedures are scheduled to take about 14 days. An instrument checkout will follow, taking an additional two weeks. When the spacecraft is declared operational, the satellite will be turned over to the National Polar Orbiting Environmental Satellite System (NPOESS) Integrated Program Office (IPO). The IPO Assistant Director of Operations (ADO) will then officially delegate operational responsibility to the NOAA Office of Satellite Operations.

DMSP, operated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), is used for strategic and tactical weather prediction to aid the U.S. military in planning operations at sea, on land and in the air. Equipped with a sophisticated sensor suite that can image visible and infrared cloud cover, the satellite collects specialized meteorological, oceanographic, and solar- geophysical information in all weather conditions. The DMSP constellation comprises two spacecraft in near-polar orbits, C3 (command, control and communications), user terminals and weather centers. The most recent launch of a DMSP spacecraft took place on December 12, 1999 from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Currently, four satellites are maintained at Space Systems' operations in Sunnyvale for storage, functional testing, and upgrading. The Titan launch vehicle is produced by Space Systems operations in Denver, Colo. The spacecraft are shipped to Vandenberg for launch when requested by the Air Force. Since 1966, the U.S. Air Force has launched more than 30 Lockheed Martin DMSP satellites. Now in its fourth decade of service, the DMSP has proven itself to be a valuable tool in scheduling and protecting military operations on land, at sea and in the air.

The U.S. Air Force's Space and Missiles Center at Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif. manages the DMSP and Titan programs.

Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company is one of the major operating units of Lockheed Martin Corporation. Space Systems designs, develops, tests, manufactures, and operates a variety of advanced technology systems for military, civil and commercial customers. Chief products include a full-range of space launch systems, including heavy-lift capability, ground systems, remote sensing and communications satellites for commercial and government customers, advanced space observatories and interplanetary spacecraft, fleet ballistic missiles and missile defense systems.

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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