U.S. Air Force Prepares To Launch Advanced GPS Satellite Built By Lockheed Martin

Launch will be 50th GPS Mission for the Nation

The U.S. Air Force is ready to launch an upgraded Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite built by Lockheed Martin aboard a Delta II rocket on March 20, from Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Fla. Improved satellite features include an advanced antenna panel, which will deliver greater performance and power for GPS receivers.

The Global Positioning System allows any properly equipped user to determine precise time and velocity and worldwide latitude, longitude and altitude to within a few meters. Although originally designed as a guidance and navigational tool for the military, GPS has proven beneficial in the commercial and civil markets for transportation, surveying and rescue operations.

The Air Force's GPS constellation currently comprises 27 satellites, including nine new-generation GPS IIR spacecraft. Built by Lockheed Martin Space Systems for the U.S. Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center, Los Angeles Air Force Base, Calif., GPS IIR satellites are designed to improve worldwide coverage and increase the overall performance of the global positioning constellation.

The very first GPS satellite was launched on February 22, 1978 aboard a Lockheed Martin-built Atlas rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. The Air Force Space Command, Schriever Air Force Base, Colo., manages and operates the GPS constellation for both civil and military users.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin employs about 130,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture and integration of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2003 sales of $31.8 billion.

Low- and high-resolution JPEG image files of GPS IIR satellites are available at: http://lmms.external.lmco.com/photos/military_space/ and click on GPS

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SOURCE: Lockheed Martin

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