

Atlas V Team Successfully Performs First Propellant Loading And Simulated Countdown At New West Coast Launch Facility

Tanking Test Is Major Milestone Leading to First Launch in 2006

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VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE, Calif.

Lockheed Martin's new West Coast Atlas V facility passed its first major operational event with a successful propellant loading test June 2. During this final test of the "pathfinder" phase of operations, intended to validate the new facility systems and their integrated operations with the launch vehicle, the team loaded the super-cold propellants on board the Atlas V and conducted several tests in a simulated launch-day fueling timeline.

"This successful tanking test is a giant step forward in getting ready for our debut Atlas V mission from Vandenberg Air Force Base next year," said Jim Spornick, Atlas Program vice president for Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. "The team proved the readiness of the refurbished launch pad to support a launch operation with a very clean test of the propellant loading systems and vehicle systems checkout procedures. The fact that this integrated test was accomplished 18 months to the day after the last Atlas IIAS launch from this pad is a tribute to the Atlas team, our suppliers and our U.S. government team members, who have truly partnered on this exceptional project."

SLC-3E is constructed with a stationary launch pad using a traditional mobile service tower, in contrast to facilities at Cape Canaveral where the rocket is stacked in a vertical integration facility and then rolled to the launch pad 12 hours before launch. Several of the former SLC-3E facilities were retained or modified while integrating numerous improvements from the East Coast Atlas V program.

Groundbreaking for Space Launch Complex 3 East refurbishment took place in January 2004. Just 14 months later, the Vandenberg Atlas team received the first actual flight hardware with the arrival of the Atlas V booster and Centaur upper stage in early March of this year. Additional activities including demonstration testing for payload operations will continue leading up to initial launch capability later this year. The first launch from SLC-3E is planned for 2006.

Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, headquartered in Denver, Colo., 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, 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, Maryland, 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 2004 sales of \$35.5 billion.

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