Lockheed Martin Celebrates 30th Anniversary Of NASA's Viking 1 Landing On The Surface Of Mars

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (NASA) Viking 1 mission to Mars captured the world's imagination 30 years ago when the first U.S. spacecraft to ever land on another planet came to rest on the surface of the red planet on July 20, 1976. Forty-five days later the second lander, Viking 2, joined its sibling on the other side of the planet and together began to rewrite the history books on Mars. Built by Lockheed Martin, in partnership with NASA and the Langley Research Center, the Viking 1 and 2 spacecraft were the most complex interplanetary missions of their time. Lockheed Martin celebrates the Viking program and the men and women whose pioneering spirit and dedication launched Viking into history and launched a bold new generation of space explorers making new discoveries in the 21st century.

"The Viking program changed the paradigm as we knew it -- it changed everything. We had to overcome huge technological hurdles as we were basically starting from scratch," said Dr. Benton Clark, chief scientist, Advanced Planetary Studies, Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. "We've been able to take the knowledge we gained from Viking and apply it to many other Mars and interplanetary programs. Our legacy isn't just the amazing science and photos, but also the wealth of knowledge we gained from building the spacecraft. It showed us that if you work hard enough with enough discipline, you can do amazing things."

During the Viking program, Clark headed the team that developed the x-ray fluorescence spectrometer instrument which was used to determine the chemical composition of the Martian soil.

Working for NASA's Langley Research Center, Lockheed Martin -- then Martin Marietta -- was the prime contractor for the Viking landers; responsible for designing, testing and building the spacecraft. Lockheed Martin also designed and built the aeroshells that protected the landers as they plunged through the Martian atmosphere, the robotic arm surface samplers, various instruments and sensors including the x-ray fluorescence spectrometer, and provided flight software and mission operations. In addition, the company built and launched the Titan IIIE/Centar launch vehicles that lofted the two paired orbiter/lander spacecraft for their 10-month cruises to Mars.

"From the beginning, Viking was all about exploring the unknown. We went to Mars for the same reason Columbus journeyed to the New World, because of the innate curiosity in mankind to understand what is beyond reach," said Jim Crocker, vice president of Civil Space at Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. "The spirit of Viking is strong in our team as we work with NASA to get America's next Mars lander, Phoenix, ready for its journey to the Martian surface. And we are already working on the design for the Viking-like aeroshell that will safely encapsulate NASA's 2009 Mars Science Laboratory."

Since Mariner 4, Lockheed Martin has proudly participated in every NASA mission to Mars and continues its partnership with NASA in the exploration of Mars and beyond. Current Mars missions Lockheed Martin is participating on include Mars Global Surveyor, 2001 Mars Odyssey, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, Phoenix Mars Lander and Mars Science Laboratory.

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 135,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation reported 2005 sales of $37.2 billion.

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