U.S. Air Force/Lockheed Martin Team Completes On-Orbit Checkout Of First SBIRS HEO Payload

Critical National Asset Will Provide Significant New Capabilities to the Warfighter

All systems are operating as expected on the first Space Based Infrared System (SBIRS) Highly Elliptical Orbit (HEO) payload following a successful on-orbit checkout by a joint U.S. Air Force/Lockheed Martin team. This national defense payload introduces new and vital capabilities for the warfighter. The HEO payload detects ballistic missile launches from northern polar regions as it operates in a highly inclined elliptical orbit. The first of a new generation of SBIRS sensors, this payload has improved sensitivity to detect dim theater missiles and can be tasked to scan off pole areas of military interest.

Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, Sunnyvale, Calif., the SBIRS prime contractor, and Northrop Grumman Electronic Systems, Azusa, Calif., the payload subcontractor, are developing SBIRS for the U.S. Air Force Space and Missile Systems Center. Air Force Space Command operates the SBIRS system. The test team completed the deployment and checkout of the HEO payload and demonstrated that its performance meets or exceeds specifications.

General Kevin Chilton, Commander, Air Force Space Command, said, "SBIRS presents a new era of global surveillance with the ability to detect and report events that were previously beyond our capabilities, providing greatly improved support to our combatant commanders."

SBIRS provides missile warning, missile defense, technical intelligence, and battle space situational awareness data to operational users and the intelligence community. Lockheed Martin is under contract to provide two HEO payloads and two geosynchronous (GEO) satellites as well as ground-based assets to receive and process infrared data. The SBIRS team has delivered both HEO payloads and is on schedule to launch the first GEO satellite in late 2008. The ground-based information processing segment of SBIRS became operational in 2001.

"Launch and checkout of the first SBIRS HEO system is a critical step in demonstrating this important new operational capability," Lt. Gen. Michael Hamel, Space and Missile Systems Center commander, noted. "SBIRS will deliver revolutionary new ways to address some of the most serious threats the nation faces."

"We are gratified by the exceptional on-orbit capabilities this new sensor will bring to our combat forces," said Joanne Maguire, Space Systems Company executive vice president. "Performance is exceeding expectations and the HEO payloads, along with the GEO satellites, will provide unprecedented new surveillance capabilities for the warfighter."

As the SBIRS prime contractor, Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company provides program management, the GEO spacecraft bus, HEO and GEO payload pointing, and system engineering and integration.

Lockheed Martin Integrated Systems & Solutions builds and maintains the SBIRS ground segment. Northrop Grumman is the major subcontractor and provides the HEO and GEO payloads and participates in ground system development and systems engineering.

"The successful on-orbit checkout reflects the team's hard work and dedication to mission success," said Mark Crowley, Lockheed Martin SBIRS vice president and program manager. "Because of sensor design commonality, we believe HEO is also a preview of the performance we will achieve with the SBIRS GEO satellites. We're looking forward to further expanding mission capabilities with the launch of the GEO satellite constellation."

Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company, a major operating unit of Lockheed Martin Corporation, designs, develops, tests, manufactures and operates a variety of advanced-technology systems for national security, civil and commercial customers. Chief products include human space flight systems; a full range of remote sensing, navigation, meteorological and communications satellites and instruments; space observatories and interplanetary spacecraft; launch vehicles, fleet ballistic missiles; and missile defense systems.

Headquartered in Bethesda, MD., Lockheed Martin employs about 140,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in 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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