Lockheed Martin Marks Landsat 40th Anniversary

SUNNYVALE, Calif., July 23, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- An unprecedented enterprise began 40 years ago today when the Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS) – later renamed Landsat – was launched. Five more Landsat spacecraft would reach orbit during the next 27 years. All were launched from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif. into near-polar orbits allowing them to image the entire Earth, one slice at a time, as it rotated below.

"We congratulate NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) on this momentous anniversary of an incredible resource that serves the entire planet," said Bob LeRoy, director of Civil Space East Coast Operations for Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) Space Systems (LMSSC), and the company's Landsat 7 program director. "Landsat is the central pillar of this nation's civil remote sensing capability, and we're enormously proud of our 40-year partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the U.S. Geological Survey. Since the very beginning of the program in 1972, Lockheed Martin has built every spacecraft, and this has been, and remains, a true source of pride for us. I am particularly proud of the men and women at our Valley Forge, Penn. facility who so distinguished themselves in the development of the Landsat spacecraft."

In 1975, NASA Administrator Dr. James Fletcher stated: "If I had to pick one spacecraft, one spacecraft development to save the world, I would pick ERTS and the satellites which I believe will be evolved from it late in this decade."

Landsat's 40-year collection of land images serves those who observe and study the Earth, those who manage and utilize its natural resources, and those who monitor the changes brought on by natural processes and human activities. The images provide information applicable to the broad and diverse needs of business, science, education, and government. The data from Landsat spacecraft constitutes the longest moderate spatial resolution multispectral record of Earth's continental surfaces as seen from space and the only such data set with near global coverage every year. The record is unmatched in quality, detail, coverage, and value. As changes occur on the Earth's surface due to natural or human-induced events, scientists are able to use the archive of imagery from the Landsat missions to better understand the behavior of the global environment.

Two Landsat spacecraft remain operational. Landsat 5, launched in 1984 with a three-year design life, continues providing imagery via its Multispectral Scanner; Landsat 5's primary instrument, the Thematic Mapper, collected data for over 27 years until a data transmission problem ended its operation late last year. Landsat 7, launched in 1999 with a five-year design life, is still generating up to 400 scenes of moderate-resolution Earth imagery daily through its science instrument, the Enhanced Thematic Mapper Plus. The Landsat program has been jointly managed by NASA and USGS since 2000 and the USGS is responsible for space flight operations, data archives, and product generation and distribution.

LMSSC, a major operating unit of Lockheed Martin Corporation, designs and develops, tests, manufactures and operates a full spectrum of advanced-technology systems for national security and military, civil government 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; laser radar; ballistic missiles; missile defense systems; and nanotechnology research and development.

Headquartered in Bethesda, Md., Lockheed Martin is a global security and aerospace company that employs about 120,000 people worldwide and is principally engaged in the research, design, development, manufacture, integration and sustainment of advanced technology systems, products and services. The corporation's net sales for 2011 were $46.5 billion.

Media Contact: Buddy Nelson, (510) 797-0349; e-mail, buddy.nelson@lmco.com

Note to Editors: A photo of the Landsat 7 spacecraft is available here.:

http://www.lockheedmartin.com/us/news/press-releases/2012/july/lockheed-martin-marks-landsat-40th-anniversary.html

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