Lockheed Martin Begins Final Assembly Of NASA's MAVEN Spacecraft

DENVER, Sept. 11, 2012 /PRNewswire/ -- Lockheed Martin (NYSE: LMT) has begun the assembly, test and launch operations (ATLO) phase for NASA's Mars Atmosphere and Volatile EvolutioN (MAVEN) spacecraft. MAVEN is scheduled to launch in November 2013 and will be the first mission devoted to understanding the Martian upper atmosphere.

ATLO represents a critical stage of the program because it is when the spacecraft begins to take form and culminates with its launch. Over the next five months technicians will install the subsystems on the main spacecraft structure, comprising avionics, power, telecomm, mechanisms, thermal systems, and guidance, navigation and control. The propulsion system was installed earlier this year and in mid-August the spacecraft was powered up with flight software for the first time.

During ATLO science instruments are being delivered to Lockheed Martin's Littleton, Colo. facility for integration with the spacecraft. Once the spacecraft has been fully assembled, it will undergo rigorous environmental testing in early 2013.

"I think it's very timely that we started assembly of MAVEN during the centennial year of our corporation," said Guy Beutelschies, MAVEN program manager at Lockheed Martin Space Systems Company. "Helping our customers rise to the challenge of tomorrow and discover new things is inherent to our core values and our team is thrilled to begin this next phase of the MAVEN mission."

On Sept. 10 the MAVEN project officially received authorization to transition into the next phase of the mission, Phase D, after completing a series of independent reviews which cover not only technical health of the project but also programmatic health (schedule and cost). The key decision meeting was held at NASA Headquarters in Washington and was chaired by NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

MAVEN is a robotic exploration mission with the goal to determine the role that loss of atmospheric gas to space played in changing the Martian climate through time. It will determine how much of the Martian atmosphere has been lost over time by measuring the current rate of escape to space and gathering enough information about the relevant processes to allow extrapolation backward in time.

MAVEN's principal investigator is based at the University of Colorado at Boulder's Laboratory for Atmospheric and Space Physics. The university will provide science operations, build instruments, and lead Education/Public Outreach. NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland, manages the project and is building two of the science instruments for the mission. Lockheed Martin of Littleton, Colo., will build the spacecraft and perform mission operations. The University of California-Berkeley Space Sciences Laboratory is building instruments for the mission. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., provides Program management via the Mars Program Office, as well as navigation support, the Deep Space Network, and the Electra telecommunications relay hardware and operations.

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.

For more information about MAVEN visit:
http://www.nasa.gov/maven
http://lasp.colorado.edu/home/maven/

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