

AVIATION WEEK

Calibrations Begin On GeoEye-1 Imaging Sat

Sep 8, 2008

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GeoEye-1, the commercial industry's highest resolution satellite, is in its calibration and checkout phase after a successful launch on a Delta II from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Sept. 6.

GeoEye Chief Executive Matthew O'Connell said the company's ground station in Tromso, Norway, made contact with the 4,310-pound satellite about 1 hour, 40 minutes after the 11:50 a.m. liftoff.

Operations are set to begin in about one month. Built by General Dynamics Advanced Information Systems in Gilbert, Ariz., GeoEye-1 carries an imaging system from ITT in Rochester, N.Y., designed to provide 16-inch resolution in black and white or 5.4-foot resolution in color from its 423-mile high orbit.

GeoEye-1 joins Ikonos, the company's 10-year veteran of high resolution imagery (2.6-foot), and the wider-view OrbView-2, an oceanographic imager whose duties include hurricane spotting, in orbit.

About half of GeoEye-1's imaging time will be conducted on behalf of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) under a \$500 million NextView contract. As the Delta II lifted off, observers could also spot Google's logo. The popular Web site will make use of GeoEye-1 imagery for Google Maps.

Joining Google in the non-U.S. government customer lineup are image buyers from Japan, Singapore, Turkey and Germany, O'Connell said.



Closeup view of GeoEye-1 launch: Boeing photo by Carleton Bailie