Ball News Releases

Ball Aerospace's NextSat Delivers First-Rate Performance

PRNewswire-FirstCall
BOULDER, Colo.

The Ball Aerospace Next Generation Satellite and Commodities Spacecraft (NextSat/CSC) has shown excellent performance during pre-separation servicing demonstrations in the first weeks following its March 8 launch with the Boeing Company's Autonomous Space Transfer and Robotic Orbiter (ASTRO).

(Photo: http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/20070410/LATU115)

NextSat and ASTRO are in the first month of a three-month mission for the Orbital Express (OE) Advanced Technology Demonstration Program led by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

To date, OE spacecraft activation checkouts have been completed along with a robotic video survey of the vehicles, successful demonstrations of autonomous refueling with the Fluid Transfer System, and robotic transfer of a battery Orbital Replacement Unit (ORU) between the ASTRO and NextSat/CSC.

Following launch, the ASTRO spacecraft experienced an anomaly with the guidance and control systems. To allow time to correct the problem, control of the mated pair was shifted from ASTRO to NextSat and the OE team used NextSat's guidance system to successfully point the mated stack towards the sun. Since then, revised software has been successfully loaded and validated, and the ASTRO vehicle is currently controlling the OE stack in the planned nominal mode.

The OE mission is designed to demonstrate the capability of robotic refueling, autonomous rendezvous and docking, as well as repairs and equipment upgrades of a spacecraft on-orbit. When initial mated demonstrations are completed, the two spacecraft will perform operations to eject the mounting ring used to mechanically support NextSat during launch, enabling the two spacecraft to separate and operate independently. Future demonstrations will include short range separation, proximity operations, and capture, followed by progressively farther-field rendezvous and capture operations from a variety of ASTRO approach directions.

Ball Aerospace supports critical missions of important national agencies such as the Department of Defense, NASA, NOAA and other U.S. government and commercial entities. The company develops and manufactures spacecraft, advanced instruments and sensors, components, data exploitation systems and RF solutions for strategic, tactical and scientific applications. Over the past 50 years, Ball Aerospace has been responsible for numerous technological and scientific "firsts" and now acts as a technology innovator for the aerospace market.

Ball Corporation is a supplier of high-quality metal and plastic packaging products and owns Ball Aerospace & Technologies Corp. Ball reported 2006 sales of $6.6 billion and employs 15,500 people.

Forward-Looking Statements

This release contains "forward-looking" statements concerning future events and financial performance. Words such as "expects," "anticipates," "estimates" and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements. Such statements are subject to risks and uncertainties which could cause actual results to differ materially from those expressed or implied. The company undertakes no obligation to publicly update or revise any forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise. Key risks and uncertainties are summarized in filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission, including Exhibit 99.2 in our Form 10-K, which are available at our Web site and at www.sec.gov. Factors that might affect our packaging segments include fluctuation in consumer and customer demand and preferences; availability and cost of raw materials, including recent significant increases in resin, steel, aluminum and energy costs, and the ability to pass such increases on to customers; competitive packaging availability, pricing and substitution; changes in climate and weather; crop yields; industry productive capacity and competitive activity; failure to achieve anticipated productivity improvements or production cost reductions, including those associated with our beverage can end project; the German mandatory deposit or other restrictive packaging laws; changes in major customer or supplier contracts or loss of a major customer or supplier; changes in foreign exchange rates, tax rates and activities of foreign subsidiaries; the effect of LIFO accounting and any changes to such accounting. Factors that might affect our aerospace segment include: funding, authorization, availability and returns of government and commercial contracts; and delays, extensions and technical uncertainties affecting segment contracts. Factors that might affect the company as a whole include those listed plus: accounting changes; successful or unsuccessful acquisitions, joint ventures or divestitures; integration of recently acquired businesses; regulatory action or laws including tax, environmental and workplace safety; governmental investigations; technological developments and innovations; goodwill impairment; antitrust, patent and other litigation; strikes; labor cost changes; rates of return projected and earned on assets of the company's defined benefit retirement plans; pension changes; reduced cash flow; interest rates affecting our debt; and changes to unaudited results due to statutory audits or other effects.

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