

Air Force rocket to launch NASA satellite

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NASA says its GeneSat-1 spacecraft will be carrying bacteria inside a miniature laboratory when it's launched into orbit Monday by a U.S. Air Force rocket.

The satellite will be a secondary payload on an Air Force four-stage Minotaur 1 rocket that will lift off from Wallops Island, Va., to deliver the Air Force TacSat 2 satellite into orbit.

"The Small Satellite Office at NASA's Ames Research Center teamed up with industry and local universities to develop the fully automated, miniature GeneSat spaceflight system that provides life support for small living things," said S. Pete Worden, director of the National Aeronautic and Space Administration's Ames Research Center.

Although the biological test will last only 96 hours, the GeneSat-1 team will evaluate the stability of the orbiting payload's systems for up to a year. The knowledge gained from GeneSat-1 will help scientists understand how spaceflight affects the human body; specifically, the intestinal bacteria that help humans digest food.

Students from Santa Clara University will control the 10-pound spacecraft in orbit from the Ames mission operations center.

Monday's 3-hour launch window opens at 7 a.m. EST.

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