

High-res commercial satellite launches from California coast

November 11 2016



In this photo provided by United Launch Alliance, an Atlas 5 rocket carrying the WorldView-4 satellite is launched at the Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Nov. 11, 2016. The satellite is designed to produce high-resolution

images of Earth from space. (United Launch Alliance via AP)

A commercial satellite capable of taking high-resolution images from space was launched Friday from a military base along the California coast.

The satellite known as WorldView-4 was lifted into orbit atop an Atlas 5 rocket from Vandenberg Air Force Base.

WorldView-4 is the latest in a series of imaging satellites built by Lockheed Martin. It is operated by Colorado-based DigitalGlobe, which provides high-resolution images for government and private customers including first responders.

The camera aboard the satellite is so sharp that it can spot the make of a car from nearly 400 miles above Earth, according to Lockheed Martin.

It joins sister satellite, WorldView-3, which launched from the Vandenberg base in 2014. Both satellites can capture images of objects as small as 1-foot across.

Friday was the ninth launch for United Launch Alliance this year. ULA, a joint venture by Lockheed Martin and Boeing Co., has launched 112 times since it was founded in 2006. Its next launch is a NASA weather satellite scheduled for next week from Cape Canaveral, Florida.

WorldView-4 was supposed to launch in September, but was postponed by a minor tank leak and two wildfires at the sprawling base, which encompasses nearly 156 square miles (405 square kilometers) along the Pacific Ocean.



An Atlas 5 rocket carrying the WorldView-4 satellite is launched at the Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., on Friday, Nov. 11, 2016. The satellite is designed to produce high-resolution images of Earth from space. (Matt Hartman via AP)

The fires forced the evacuation of administrative buildings, but did not affect the launch complex. Firefighters who were assigned to the launch were diverted to corralling the flames.

A firefighter died and another was hurt when the water truck they were in overturned on a highway outside the city of Lompoc, miles from the fire lines.

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