SpaceX launches final 10 satellites for Iridium

January 11 2019

SpaceX launches its unmanned Dragon cargo ship, loaded with supplies, science experiments and food for the astronauts living at the International Space Station, from Cape Canaveral, Florida, on December 5, 2018

SpaceX on Friday blasted off a payload of global communications satellites for Iridium, marking the first launch of 2019 for the California-based company headed by Elon Musk.

"Three, two, one, ignition, liftoff of Falcon 9," Iridium CEO Matt Desch said on a live webcast as the white Falcon 9 rocket took flight from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California at 7:31 am (1531 GMT).

The mission, carrying 10 Iridium NEXT satellites to orbit, completes Iridium's project to replace the world's largest commercial communication satellite network with 75 new satellites in orbit.

Friday's launch was SpaceX's eighth and final in a series for Iridium, which is headquartered in Virginia.

Nine minutes after launch, the tall portion of the Falcon 9 rocket landed successfully on a floating platform in the Pacific Ocean.

"There it is, right in the middle of the bullseye," said SpaceX commentator John Innsbrucker, as live images showed the first stage of the rocket standing upright on the droneship named "Just Read the Instructions."

Like other rockets, SpaceX's separate after launch into a first and second stage.

But instead of allowing the first stage, or booster, to fall into the ocean as trash, SpaceX's Falcon 9 fires its engines, maneuvers its grid fins and makes a controlled landing back on Earth.

The effort aims to cut the costs of spaceflight and make expensive rocket parts more reusable, like airplanes.

© 2019 AFP

Citation: SpaceX launches final 10 satellites for Iridium (2019, January 11) retrieved 10 April 2024 from https://phys.org/news/2019-01-spacex-iridium-satellites.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.