

UPDATE: Statement From SpaceX... Big Bird Soars On Mission With THAICOM 6 Satellite (Launch Of Falcon 9)

Cape Canaveral Air Force Station, Florida – Today, Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) successfully launched the THAICOM 6 satellite for leading Asian satellite operator THAICOM. Falcon 9 delivered THAICOM 6 to its targeted 295 x 90,000 km geosynchronous transfer orbit at 22.5 degrees inclination. The Falcon 9 launch vehicle performed as expected, meeting 100 percent of mission objectives.

Falcon 9 lifted off from Space Launch Complex 40 (SLC-40) at 5:06 PM Eastern Time. Approximately 184 seconds into flight, Falcon 9's second-stage Merlin vacuum engine ignited to begin a five minute, 35 second burn that delivered the THAICOM 6 satellite into its parking orbit. Eighteen minutes after injection into the parking orbit, the second stage engine relit for just over one minute to carry the THAICOM 6 satellite to its final geostationary transfer orbit. The restart of the Falcon 9 second stage is a requirement for all geostationary transfer missions.

“Today’s successful launch of the THAICOM 6 satellite marks the eighth successful flight in a row for Falcon 9,” said Gwynne Shotwell, President of SpaceX. “SpaceX greatly appreciates THAICOM’s support throughout this campaign and we look forward to a busy launch schedule in 2014.”

The THAICOM 6 mission marks Falcon 9’s second flight to a geosynchronous transfer orbit and begins a regular cadence of launches planned for SpaceX in 2014. SpaceX has nearly 50 launches on manifest, of which over 60% are for commercial customers.

This launch also marks the third of three qualification flights needed to certify the Falcon 9 to fly missions under the Evolved Expendable Launch Vehicle (EELV) program. Once Falcon 9 is certified, SpaceX will be eligible to compete to launch national security satellites for the U.S. Air Force.