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## **U.S. Space Force successfully launches sixth GPS III satellite on Falcon 9**

**SUMMARY:** The Global Positioning System (GPS) III-6 mission successfully launched from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station's Space Launch Complex-40 at 7:24 a.m. EST, Jan. 18. Next, engineers and operators will begin on-orbit checkout and tests prior to the satellite's turnover to the operators.

LOS ANGELES AIR FORCE BASE – EL SEGUNDO, Calif. – The U.S. Space Force's (USSF) Space Systems Command (SSC) successfully launched the GPS III Space Vehicle 06 (SV06) on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket at 7:24 a.m. EST on Jan. 18 from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida. The Falcon 9 team confirmed that the rocket performed flawlessly, and the satellite was safely delivered to its target orbit, separating from its upper stage approximately 89 minutes after launch. GPS III SV06 will join the U. S. Space Force's current GPS constellation comprised of 31 operational spacecraft. GPS III, the newest generation of GPS satellites, brings new capabilities to users, including three times greater accuracy and up to eight times improved anti-jamming capabilities.

"With the GPS III SV06 launch, GPS has accomplished another step towards Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT)'s overall mission of modernizing capabilities for our civilians and military users while maintaining the performance and resiliency of our existing architecture," said Cordell DeLaPena Jr., program executive officer for Military Communications & PNT Directorate. I am extremely proud of the work GPS's teams and collaborators have done to bring our satellite infrastructure closer to a new age of robust and highly accurate signals."

Next, engineers and operators at Lockheed Martin's Waterton, Colorado facility will begin on-orbit checkout and tests, which are estimated to be completed in approximately two weeks. Operational use is set to begin in a few months. The previous GPS launch for the U.S. Space Force, GPS III SV05, was in June 2021 and was the first-ever National Security Space Launch (NSSL) mission to use a previously flown booster. Today, as with GPS III SV05, SpaceX recovered the first-stage rocket and will refurbish it for a subsequent launch.

"This was a textbook launch, reflecting a highly professional, experienced team executing well-honed procedures and the results speak for themselves," said Maj. Gen. Stephen Purdy Jr., program executive officer for SSC Assured Access to Space (AATS). "Working side-by-side with our launch service provider and space vehicle partner to meet the mission need on-time and with precision is our normal ops. And today's mission supports not only our global warfighters but people all over the world in every facet of life."

This launch was the third Falcon 9 NSSL mission in less than a year, the last being a mission with the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) in April 2022. The booster from that launch also was recovered for reuse. This innovation has become standard practice for SpaceX launches of this class. Flying several missions with fewer new boosters saves on costs, storage and handling and allows for added flexibility to manage a dynamic manifest.

"We're reaping the benefits of this innovation with every launch. We embraced this concept six years ago, understanding the economic benefits and efficiencies that come with this formula, and now we're simply executing to a common plan." said Scott Chappie, Space Systems Command's mission director. "As we move forward together, we're methodically expanding reuse for our NSSL missions, to further leverage the benefits for us and our space

vehicle teammates. Our assessment of spaceflight worthiness is grounded in Mission Assurance and these processes are tailorable by design; they adjust to the state of the booster. We must be as efficient as we are sure about all aspects of the launch campaign when it comes to critical national capabilities."

SSC is the U.S. Space Force field command responsible for rapidly developing, acquiring, equipping, fielding, and sustaining lethal and resilient space capabilities. SSC mission capability areas include launch acquisition and operations, Military Communications & PNT, space sensing, battle management command, control and communications, and space domain awareness & combat power. SSC is headquartered at Los Angeles Air Force Base in El Segundo, Calif.

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Silhouetted against the rising sun, a Falcon-9 rocket carrying the GPS III-6 satellite aboard lifts off from Space Launch Complex 40 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida. Lift-off occurred at 7:24 a.m. EST, Jan. 18. (Photo courtesy of SpaceX)



GPS III-6 separates from the Falcon 9 upper stage approximately 89 minutes after launch from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Florida, at 7:24 a.m. EST, Jan. 18. (Screen shot from SpaceX launch livestream)