

NRO Successfully Launches Payload from Atlas IIAS



With Hurricane Frances rapidly approaching the Florida coast, a National Reconnaissance Office payload was successfully launched aboard an Atlas IIAS rocket from Cape Canaveral AFS, Fla. on Aug. 31 at 7:17 p.m. EDT.

The oncoming hurricane forced the launch team to decide between taking the payload and booster off the launch pad or try to launch again on Aug. 31. The launch team encountered four launch delays due to technical and weather concerns. A fifth launch delay might have forced the booster and satellite to ride out the impact of Hurricane Frances while “buttoned up” on the launch pad.

“It was a very difficult decision and we looked at the pros and cons of every aspect of that decision and it was determined that the best course of action was to try to launch again,” said Col Chip Zakrzewski, mission director for the launch and the director of the Office of Space Launch. “The entire launch team was just tremendous. We overcame a number of challenges to successfully accomplish this launch. I couldn't be happier.”

The Lockheed Martin Atlas IIAS launched from Cape Canaveral's Launch Complex 36A.