



AMSAT[®]

The Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation

NEWS RELEASE

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ARIANE 501 FLIGHT FAILS

Several news accounts have reported that the first flight test of the Ariane 5 launch vehicle was destroyed by ground-based command 40 seconds into the flight at an altitude of about 12,000 feet (4,000 meters) as it appeared that the rocket was veering off course. The launch was initiated at 1233 Universal Time June 4, from the European Space Agency's Kourou launch facility in French Guiana, South America. Ariane 501 carried a group of four scientific satellites known as "Cluster" which were, of course, destroyed as well. No Amateur Radio satellites were aboard.

The AMSAT Phase 3D spacecraft, currently under construction, is manifested on the second flight test of the Ariane 5 series (Ariane 502) which, according to ESA's latest schedule, is to be launched in October of this year. AMSAT officials believe that it is too early to know what effect the Ariane 501 failure will have on the 502 schedule, or on the possible Phase 3D launch date, or the vehicle on which it will ride. However, a schedule stretch out beyond the re-entry of AO-13 cannot be ruled out.

AMSAT-DL President Karl Meinzer DJ4ZC and AMSAT-NA President Bill Tynan W3XO, expressed their sadness on hearing the news. In a joint statement they said, "We, at AMSAT, have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with ESA for over fifteen years and we are, quite naturally, distressed to hear of this unfortunate occurrence." They further noted that, except for the RS and Fuji satellites, all successful amateur satellite launches since the early 1980s have been on Ariane vehicles. On behalf of the Amateur Radio satellite community, they extend sincere condolences to ESA, ArianeSpace, CNES and the Cluster Project. Both expressed confidence, however, that the ESA team will overcome this setback and develop a most successful launch vehicle. DJ4ZC and W3XO said that they are together in anticipating a successful launch of Phase 3D on a forthcoming Ariane mission.

AMSAT is a not-for-profit, 501(c)(3) educational and scientific organization that was first chartered in Washington, DC, USA. Its objectives include promoting space research and communication by building, launching and controlling Amateur Radio spacecraft. Since its founding, over 25 years ago, many other like-minded organizations have been formed around the world to pursue the same goals and who now also share the AMSAT name. Often acting together, these groups have used predominantly volunteer labor and donated resources to design, construct and, with the added assistance of government and commercial space agencies, successfully launch, over two dozen Amateur Radio communications satellites into Earth orbit. The Phase 3-D satellite, now under construction with the help of over a dozen AMSAT groups on five continents, will be the largest, most complex, and most expensive Amateur Radio satellite ever built.

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