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The Radio Amateur Satellite Corporation

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ARIANE 502 LAUNCH SUCCESSFUL

Kourou, French Guiana (AMSAT News Service) Several news sources have reported that the second flight test of the Ariane 5 launch vehicle (Ariane 502) was a success, and ESA has declared the launch as such. These same reports have also stated that the upper stage payloads, the two MAQSATs (B and H), were successfully separated and deployed into a geostationary transfer orbit as planned. Early accounts noted that the launch was initiated at 1343 Universal Time on October 30, 1997, from the European Space Agency's Kourou launch facility in French Guiana, South America.

Ariane 502 carried three payloads. Two were the MAQSATs which were instrumented payloads designed to simulate two large geostationary satellites as well as to measure the Ariane 5 flight environment. The payload also included a smaller satellite, called TEAMSAT. TEAMSAT is an experimental scientific satellite. No Amateur Radio satellites were aboard.

The AMSAT Phase 3D spacecraft, currently nearing completion, was to have flown on this flight test of the Ariane 5 series. However, in August, ESA removed P3-D from the AR-502 manifest when it became clear that needed structural modifications to the P3-D spaceframe would not be finished in time to make the AR-502 launch and the Phase 3-D completion schedules compatible. The modifications came as a result of ESA's discovery that launch loads on the AR-502 flight might be significantly higher than ESA had first anticipated.

AMSAT officials believe that it is still too early to know what the effect Ariane 502's now apparent success will have on the subsequent Ariane schedule, on the possible Phase 3D launch, or the vehicle on which it will ultimately ride. However, it was anticipated that a successful AR-502 flight would give ESA added flexibility in scheduling a subsequent launch for Phase 3-D on a future Ariane flight.

AMSAT-DL President Karl Meinzer DJ4ZC and AMSAT-NA President Bill Tynan W3XO, expressed their great joy and relief on hearing the news. In a joint statement they said, "After the failure of Ariane 501 in 1996, we at AMSAT-DL and AMSAT-NA were, quite naturally, very distressed to hear of that unfortunate occurrence." "This subsequent

success of the Ariane 502 flight puts ESA's Ariane 5 program back on track and, even though we were not aboard this time, is very good news for us."

On behalf of the Amateur Radio satellite community, both AMSAT Presidents extend their sincere congratulations to ESA, ArianeSpace, CNES as well as to the members of the TEAMSAT Project.

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