5555 Lakeview Drive, Suite 201
Kirkland, WA 98033
www.AirLaunchLLC.com
Contact: Trina Paskett (435) 881-2823 or Linda Strine (303) 726-8416

July 27, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPERATIONAL C-17A USED TO BREAK ANOTHER RECORD WITH AIRLAUNCH IN DARPA / AIR FORCE FALCON SMALL LAUNCH VEHICLE PROGRAM

Kirkland, Wash. – A government/industry team from AirLaunch LLC, the Air Force Flight Test Center, and DARPA using a C-17 from the 62nd Airlift Wing broke records yesterday for the largest single object to be dropped from a C-17 as a full-scale simulated AirLaunch QuickReach™ rocket weighing 72,000 pounds was dropped as part of the DARPA / Air Force Falcon Small Launch Vehicle (SLV) Program.

The team broke their own record set just over a month ago when a simulated QuickReach™ rocket that weighed 65,000 pounds was dropped out of a C-17 on June 14.

AirLaunch drop test breaks month-old record for heaviest single object dropped from a C-17 aircraft on July 26.

"When we learned in June that we may have another aircraft available in as short as a month, the entire team put in extra effort to make this drop test happen," said Debra Facktor Lepore, president of AirLaunch LLC. "We were particularly excited to use a C-17 borrowed from McChord Air Force Base, located near AirLaunch's Seattle area headquarters, to support the test flown by the Air Force Flight Test Center at Edwards Air Force Base."

The drop was third in a series of envelope expansion tests to verify the ability of the C-17 to safely deliver AirLaunch's full-scale, full-weight QuickReach™ rocket to its operational launch altitude. Each test set a new C-17 record for the longest and heaviest single items dropped from the aircraft.

"The team has now flown three drop tests, using three separate C-17 aircraft, demonstrating that any C-17 can be used for AirLaunch drops and ultimately for our QuickReach™ launches," said Lepore. "This test also leads to a new spacelift role for the C-17 – the aircraft can deliver troops and humanitarian aid one day and launch a satellite the next."

At 65.8 feet in length and a weight of 72,000 pounds, the simulated QuickReach™ drop test article matches the characteristics of an operational rocket. The unmodified C-17A aircraft released the test article at the operational launch altitude of 32,000 feet, with a true air speed of 330 knots.

"The launch vehicle extraction worked exactly as predicted," said Dr. Marti Sarigul-Klijn, AirLaunch's chief engineer for Gravity Air Launch, who was part of the history making flight crew. "Our combined AirLaunch/DARPA/Air Force team has worked diligently to accurately predict the performance of the simulated QuickReach™ rocket to assure crew and system safety."

AirLaunch's drop tests are being performed as part of the Falcon SLV program, administered by the U.S. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) and the U.S. Air Force. The program is developing operational responsive space launch vehicles as called for in the United States Space Transportation Policy. Responsive space would allow the government to react quickly and use small satellites equipped with sensors to monitor and provide communication for urgent military needs.

"Having a quick reaction launch system that can launch specialized small satellites will provide the warfighter with real-time data and communication during time-urgent situations," said Steve Walker, DARPA program manager. "This test demonstrates that small companies can successfully work with government agencies to produce low cost, innovative solutions for the warfighter."

The Falcon SLV program goal is to develop a vehicle that can launch a 1,000 pound satellite to Low Earth Orbit (LEO) for less than $5 million, within 24 hours of notice. AirLaunch achieves responsiveness by launching from altitude from an unmodified C-17A or other cargo aircraft.

"We have been able to navigate our way successfully through the safety process of dropping an inert rocket out of a C-17 by working together with multiple government entities under a fixed price, milestone-based agreement," said Livingston Holder, AirLaunch chief program executive. "It shows that rapid prototyping works and that a small team like ours can really perform in a complex environment."

AirLaunch LLC is supported by an experienced team of industry and government partners. The drop test and related activities were conducted at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., by the Air Force Flight Test Center (AFFTC) 412th Test Wing and the 418th Flight Test Squadron in conjunction with the Air Force Space Command's Space and Missile Systems Center Detachment 12 of Kirtland Air Force Base, New Mexico and the C-17 Systems Group of Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio. The C-17 Air Mobility Command aircraft was supplied to AFFTC for the test by the 62nd Airlift Wing of McChord Air Force Base, Wash., having just returned from a 140-day mission in Afghanistan.

Industry team members contributing to AirLaunch's series of drop tests include Space Vector of Chatsworth, Calif. (storage and launch carrier, vehicle components, integration support); Western Trailers of Boise, Idaho (rocket transporter); Scaled Composites of Mojave, Calif. (data acquisition system, truck mounted model testing); Irvin Aerospace of Santa Ana, Calif. (drogue parachute); Pioneer Aerospace of South Windsor, Conn. (drogue parachute); Protoflight of Mojave, Calif. (instrumentation, testing, integration); Boeing C-17 Performance Group of Long Beach, Calif. (aircraft analysis); Fiberset of Mojave, Calif. (nose cone); Brown-Minneapolis Tank Co. of Albuquerque, New Mexico (drop test article); Hanson Tank of Los Angeles, Calif. (drop test article); Free Flight Enterprises of Lake Elsinore, Calif. (parachute risers); University of California at Davis of Davis, Calif. (extraction dynamics analysis and computational fluid dynamics analysis); University of Arizona of Tucson, Ariz. (wind tunnel testing, model testing); and Nielsen Engineering and Research of Mountain View, Calif. (computational fluid dynamics analysis).

AirLaunch LLC is a small business headquartered in Kirkland, Washington. It is responsible for program management and integration of the QuickReach™ small launch vehicle and has completed three of six milestones to date under its current DARPA/Air Force Falcon SLV Phase 2B contract.

For more information visit: www.AirLaunchLLC.com.

###