

# NEWS RELEASE



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## **USA SUPPORTS NEW HORIZONS LAUNCH**

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER, FL (Jan. 19, 2006) -- When Pluto-bound New Horizons launched from Pad 41 at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station today, it did so with the support of United Space Alliance's two Solid Rocket Booster Recovery Ships, which tracked the Atlas V rocket via enhanced radar systems.

"USA's support of the New Horizons launch is just one example of our capabilities in terms of launch operations beyond shuttle. We're proud to participate in today's launch, and look forward to continuing to expand our operations support," said William Pickavance, USA's Florida Site Director.

The USA-operated ships – the Liberty Star and Freedom Star – are each equipped with new x-band Doppler radar systems that have been customized for the purpose of monitoring launches. This radar equipment was installed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration as part of the overall upgrade to the imagery equipment used for space shuttle launches. According to Anthony Griffith, the NASA debris radar system project manager, a temporary version of this equipment was used to track the launch of Space Shuttle Discovery during the Return to Flight mission in July.

"Today's launch marks the first full use of the newly installed, permanent radar system," Griffith said. He noted that the new system is based on a Navy radar system that was used in the past.

According to NASA's Expendable Launch Vehicle program spokesman George Diller, the radar test during Discovery's launch was a success.

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“It worked very well,” Diller said, adding, “the new ships’ radar systems, working in concert with the new 50-foot, 3 megawatt, C-band radar located at the northern end of Kennedy Space Center, provide much higher definition imagery than we’ve ever had before.”

According to Joe Chaput, USA’s Marine Operations Manager, the ships departed early today to get in position for the launch.

“The USA crew is excited and proud to go beyond our normal space shuttle duties to support the New Horizons mission,” Chaput said.

New Horizons will be the first spacecraft to Pluto and its moon, Charon. It will take at least nine and a half years to reach the ninth planet

United Space Alliance, established in 1995, is a leader in space operations offering extensive experience in space launch and recovery operations; mission planning and control; flight hardware processing; space flight training; on-orbit assembly, payload deployment and servicing; rendezvous/proximity operations and docking; large-scale integration and sustaining engineering. United Space Alliance serves as NASA’s prime contractor for the Space Shuttle and provides operations services for the International Space Station. United Space Alliance employs more than 10,000 people in Texas, Florida, and Alabama.

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