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Contact: Roland Coelho
(805) 756-5087
rcoelho@calpoly.edu

Amy Hewes
(805) 756-6402
ahewes@calpoly.edu

Kazakhstan Rocket Crashes; Student CubeSats' Fate Unknown

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly aerospace graduate students got a taste of the drama of aerospace Wednesday when the Kazakhstani rocket carrying their picosatellites launched successfully -- but then crashed into the Indian Ocean shortly thereafter.

The student team on the ground in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, and cosmodrome launch crews there, were awaiting signals from the small sized "CubeSats" Wednesday afternoon to see if they were able to deploy before the rocket failed.

Crews are also working to discover what caused the rocket to fail shortly before reaching target orbit altitude. Grad students Armen Toorian and Lori Brooks, along with Cal Poly Sponsored Programs Director Jill Keezer, are "on the ground" in Baikonur, and a host of Cal Poly College of Engineering professors and students, as well as visiting dignitaries, watched the launch via a live feed.

Click Here to watch the launch video
Click Here for audio of the launch
Read the original pre-launch news release

About the CubeSat Project
The CubeSat Project is an international collaboration of over 80 universities, high schools and private firms developing picosatellites. The small (pico) satellites contain scientific, private and government payloads. On July 26, 14 CubeSats designed and built by students at various universities in the U.S. and elsewhere are scheduled to launch into space aboard a Dnepr-1LV rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

Built to specifications developed by Cal Poly and Stanford University's Space Systems Development Laboratory, all the picosatellites will be launched from P-Pod deployers designed and built at Cal Poly.