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Google to buy GeoEye satellite imagery

Google has signed a deal under which GeoEye will supply the search giant with imagery from a satellite due to launch in coming days, the companies said.

Under the deal, Google is the exclusive online mapping site that may use the imagery, said Mark Brender, vice president of corporate communications and marketing. Google uses satellite imagery in its Google Maps and Google Earth product.

And as a little icing on the cake, Google's logo is on the side of the rocket set to launch the 4,300-pound satellite in six days from Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Terms of the deal weren't disclosed.

GeoEye-1 will orbit 423 miles above Earth, but it will be able to gather imagery with details the size of 41 centimeters, Brender said. Google, though, is permitted to use data only with a resolution of 50cm because of the terms of GeoEye's license with the U.S. government.

Each day, the satellite will be able to gather a high-resolution "**pan-sharpened**" format surface area equal to that of about New Mexico, the company said.

"The GeoEye-1 satellite has the highest ground resolution color imagery available in the commercial marketplace and will produce high-quality imagery with a very accurate geolocation," said Google spokeswoman Kate Hurowitz, adding that most commercial satellite imagery has a resolution of 60cm. "It is our goal to display high-resolution imagery for as much of the world as possible, and GeoEye-1 will help further that goal."



Google got a sponsor logo on the side of this rocket, set to launch the GeoEye-1 imaging satellite on September 4. (Credit: GeoEye)



The Google-emblazoned rocket. (Credit: GeoEye/ULA)

ITT built the imaging subsystem, and **General Dynamics** built the overall satellite, Brender said. GeoEye also contracted with ITT for the imaging in the GeoEye-2 satellite, due to launch in 2011 or 2012, Brender said. According to ITT, that satellite will have a resolution of 25cm, or about 9.75 inches.

Google's current imagery in Google Earth spans a range of resolution, the coarsest being 15 square meters per pixel, which is only good enough to see larger geographic features.