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Dawn mission status and plans

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The Dawn mission, the ninth project in the Discovery series, launched on September 7th 2007 to rendezvous with and orbit the two largest minor planets 4 Vesta and 1 Ceres. The mission successfully completed the initial checkout of the spacecraft and instruments and began high-duty-cycle thrusting with the ion propulsion system on December 17. Dawn will reach Vesta in May of 2011 after a gravity-assist flyby of Mars in Feb 2009. This paper discusses the mission's objectives, trajectory through the main asteroid belt, instrument performance, and objectives and plans for Vesta and Ceres.