



April 2026

Update

**Oklahoma Space
Alliance**

A Chapter of The
National Space Society

A free email newsletter of the Oklahoma Space Alliance

Artemis 2 Launch



Credit: NASA/Joel Kowsky



April 2026 OSA Meeting

Saturday, April 11, 2025

2:00 PM

Norman Computers

916 W Main St, Norman, OK
73069

405-863-6173

Program— Space News
and Events

Website:

<http://osa.nss.org>

Quote of the Month

"I like to tell people that I had the two best jobs in the world. I was a parent and I was an astronaut." – Col. Eileen M. Collins

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Oklahoma Space Alliance Update

April 11, 2026

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Better Late Than Never



Credit: NASA/Ben Smegelsky

No foolin', Artemis 2 launched on April 1. Splashdown at 7:07 PM EDT, right on schedule, after looping the moon at 4,000 miles (with a prerecorded congratulations from beyond the grave from Jim Lovell).

Articles: <https://www.space.com/space-exploration/artemis/nasa-launches-4-astronauts-to-the-moon-on-historic-artemis-2-voyage-a-lunar-leap-for-the-21st-century>

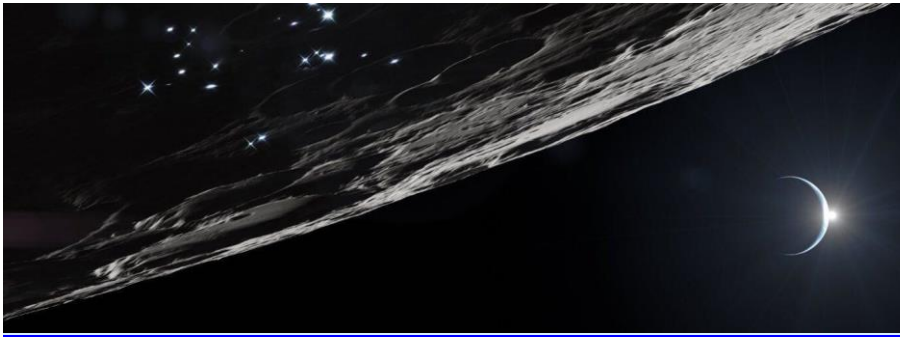
<https://www.space.com/space-exploration/human-spaceflight/artemis-2-captures-historic-earthset-photo-space-photo-of-the-day-for-april-7-2026>

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/04/astronauts-set-distance-record-revealing-the-moon-as-a-place-to-be-explored/>

<https://www.space.com/entertainment/space-games/artemis-2-mission-sends-kerbal-space-program-player-numbers-soaring>

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/04/four-astronauts-are-back-home-after-a-daring-ride-around-the-moon/>

The Surface is Where It's At



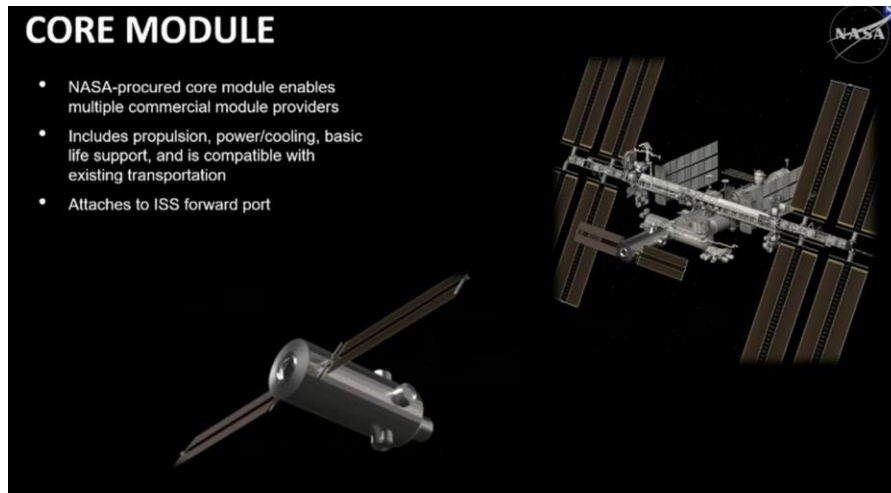
Credit: NASA

There was lots of news at the “Ignition” event held by NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman and other NASA leaders to lay out their very ambitious plans for the moon (and elsewhere) for the next decade. Aside from getting Artemis on the moon’s surface by the end of 2028, the big news was the plan for a lunar base to be operational by 2036, after landing 215 metric tons on the lunar surface over the course of the coming decade. Bye-bye Lunar Gateway, no time or money to spare for you in this plan.

Articles: <https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/03/nasa-kills-lunar-space-station-to-focus-on-ambitious-moon-base/>

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/03/we-got-an-audience-with-the-lunar-viceoy-to-talk-how-nasa-will-build-a-moon-base/>

The Spring of Our Discontent



Credit: NASA

During the Ignition event, NASA leaders said the quiet part out loud: they are not confident in the viability of a commercial marketplace for humans in LEO, and the agency's plan to work with private companies to develop independent space stations does not appear to be headed toward success. What NASA proposes to do about that has all the commercial contenders upset.

Articles: <https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/03/what-happens-next-with-nasas-plan-to-replace-the-iss-source-it-could-get-ugly/>

The New NASA, Boldly Going



Credit: NASA

On March 24, NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman outlined plans for a nuclear-powered mission to Mars that will launch in December 2028. Space Reactor-1 Freedom (SR-1 Freedom) will use repurposed Lunar Gateway hardware; it will not only demonstrate highly efficient mass transport in space, it will use that capacity to deliver multiple Ingenuity-class helicopters to explore the Red Planet.

Article: <https://www.space.com/astronomy/mars/nasas-1st-nuclear-powered-interplanetary-spacecraft-will-send-skyfall-helicopters-to-mars-in-2028>

<https://www.nasaspaceflight.com/2026/03/nasa-sr1-freedom-mars-2028/>

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/03/here-is-nasas-plan-for-nuking-gateway-and-sending-it-to-mars/>

What Is Wrong with These Guys?



Credit: whitehouse.gov

Even as the Artemis 2 crew were headed for the moon, the Trump administration's proposed NASA budget for FY '27, released on Good Friday, cut NASA's funding by 23 percent – about the same amount as in their proposed budget for FY '26, which was fortunately rejected by Congress.

Article: <https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/04/trump-proposes-steep-cut-to-nasa-budget-as-astronauts-head-for-the-moon/>

A Really Big Boost



Credit: USSF

The Trump administration's recently released FY '27 budget proposal calls for Space Force to get \$71B in the coming fiscal year. That's an 80% increase.

Articles: <https://www.airandspaceforces.com/space-force-80-percent-funding-boost-2027-budget/>

It's Really Fixed, Apparently



Credit: NASA/Roscosmos

The Progress 94 mission lifted out of Baikonur on March 22, from the pad that was damaged last year.

Articles: <https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/russia-progress-94-cargo-launch-iss-soyuz-rocket>

Hello, Mr. Chips



Credit: SpaceX

At the defunct Seaholm Power Plant in Austin, Texas, Elon Musk took the stage on March 21 to officially unveil what he described as “the most epic chip building exercise in history by far.” TERAFAF is a \$20-25B joint venture between Tesla, SpaceX, and xAI to make the chips SpaceX will eventually deploy in solar-powered AI satellites.

Articles: <https://www.teslarati.com/elon-musk-lanuches-terafab-tesla-spacexai-chip-factory/>

https://finance.yahoo.com/news/elon-musks-terafab-is-here-what-it-is-and-why-its-important-for-tesla-and-spacex-163426221.html?fr=yhssrp_catchall

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonmarkman/2026/04/10/intel-joins-terafab-to-build-elon-musks-25b-ai-chip-project/>

That's Trillion With a T



Credit: SpaceX

SpaceX filed with the SEC to go public, with a proposed valuation of \$1.75 trillion. That will make it, by quite a distance, the largest IPO in history. The IPO is expected sometime in June, potentially coinciding—at Musk's behest—with a rare planetary alignment and his 55th birthday.

Article: <https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/04/spacex-finally-files-for-ipo-targets-1-75-trillion-valuation/>

<https://www.investopedia.com/spacex-filed-to-go-public-every-step-between-now-and-when-you-can-buy-shares-11940905>

<https://www.cnbc.com/2026/04/07/spacex-lays-out-ipo-details-targets-early-june-roadshow-reuters.html>

Making a Comeback?



Credit: Virgin Galactic

Virgin Galactic's stock price popped, at least briefly, on the announcement that it's resuming ticket sales – at \$750K per seat.

Articles: <https://seekingalpha.com/news/4570493-virgin-galactic-targets-commercial-service-launch-in-q4-2026-as-flight-cadence-ramps-to-10>

<https://www.space-agencies.com/2026/04/04/virgin-galactic-prepares-its-comeback/>

https://finance.yahoo.com/markets/stocks/articles/virgin-galactic-rockets-18-higher-142025081.html?fr=yhssrp_catchall&guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9zZWFiY2gueWFob28uY29tL3locy9zZWFiY2g7X3lsdD1Bd3JpZ3hjQVR0VnBwbTRBd3Q0UHhRdC47X3lsdT1ZMjZlYndOaVpqcRUVjRzI6QXpFRWRuUnBaQU1FYzJWakEzQmhaMmx1WVhScGlyNC0_aHNwYXJ0PjN6JmhaW1wPXlocy0wOTkmdHlwZT10eXBIODA0ODEtMjMwMDk2MzI5MyZwYXJhbTE9MzE3OTE1MDQ1MiZmcj15aHMtc3otMDk5JnA9dmlyZ2luK2dhbGFjdGljK25ld3MmYj0xJnB6PTYmYmNOPTAmeGFyZ3M9MA&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAACaV91DfpShMQdgs1LzGtK1aGUEX9Cr4izVVaEVhoHha2xwNoOtCnrQnDGhOW8msmabE9_9QlhgH6j5dg9IbTSSucMTrNve7PCo74sLMx-bUfW2IgmJS0jhcfMvzNscv_U0mFbW-yleaLMb6XiHdoagwGAI814Y8taCW_F_UqPzD

<https://www.cnet.com/science/space/virgin-galactic-resumes-space-flights/>

China Enters Orbital Servicing



Credit: Emosat

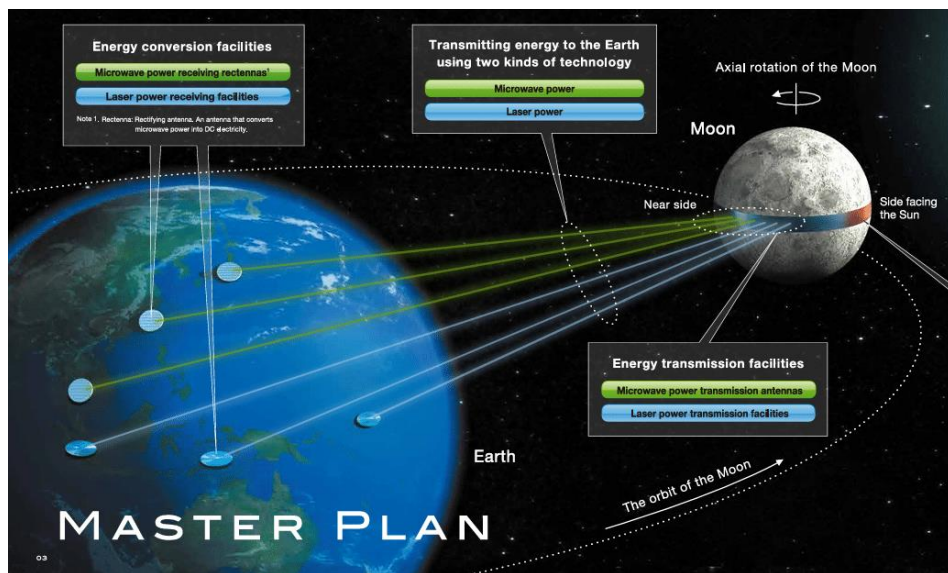
Emosat's Hukeda-2 (aka Yuxing-3 06), recently completed a refueling test in LEO using a flexible robotic arm. This is China's first commercial experimental satellite equipped with a flexible robotic arm.

Article: <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202603/1357637.shtml>

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/science/general/chinese-satellite-with-robotic-octopus-arm-passes-key-refueling-test-in-orbit/ar-AA201qYt>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R3TOZ2PgPPY>

Thinking Big



Credit: Shimizu Corp

Instead of putting solar power satellites in earth orbit, Shimizu Corp proposes to put a ring of solar panels around the entire lunar equator.

Article: <https://dailygalaxy.com/2026/04/japan-build-moon-solar-ring-endless-energy/>

A Bad Precedent?



Credit: Planet Labs PBC/AP

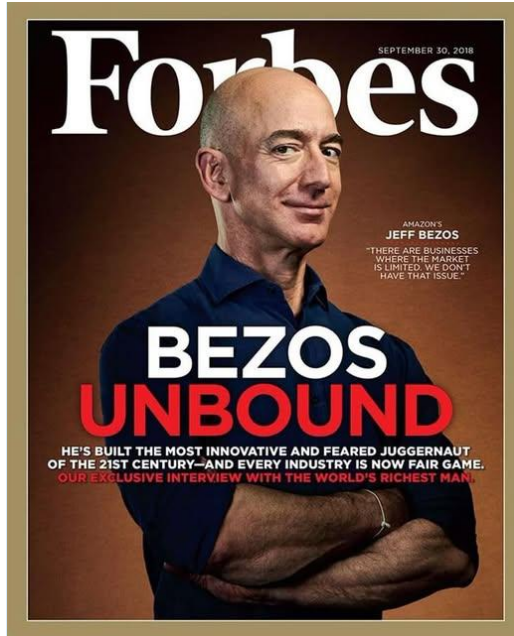
The public's right to know vs. military security? At the request of the U.S. government, Planet Labs is withholding imagery of Iran from the public indefinitely.

Article: <https://www.space.com/space-exploration/satellites/it-probably-will-start-a-precedent-why-satellite-companys-withholding-of-iran-imagery-has-this-expert-worried>

<https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/03/satellite-firm-pauses-imagery-after-revealing-irans-attacks-on-us-bases/>

Commented [U1]:

Thanks for Nothing



Credit: Forbes

In 2016, Blue Origin issued stock options to its employees. Trouble is, they were set to expire after 10 years, and as yet there's been no IPO to allow them to be exercised. They're expiring worthless.

Articles: <https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/03/after-years-of-missteps-blue-origin-to-finally-offer-meaningful-stock-options/>

NEO Hunter



Credit: Blue Origin

Blue Origin proposes another mission for its multipurpose Blue Ring platform: asteroid deflector.

Article: <https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/jeff-bezos-blue-origin-wants-to-defend-earth-against-dangerous-asteroids-heres-how>

Safe from Chinese Competition, For the Moment



Credit: USAF

On April 3, Chinese start-up Space Pioneer's Tianlong-3 rocket (a direct attempt to mimic Falcon 9) suffered a flight anomaly on its debut launch and failed to reach orbit.

Article: <https://starlust.org/maiden-flight-of-reusable-chinese-rocket-designed-to-rival-space-xs-falcon-9-fails/>

<https://spacenews.com/chinas-commercial-tianlong-3-rocket-fails-on-debut-launch/>

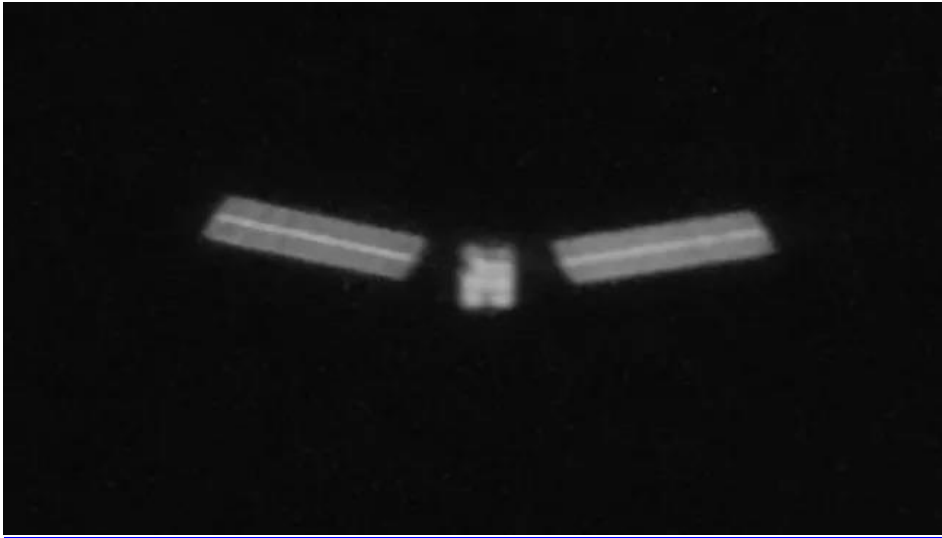
<https://douglasmessier.substack.com/p/tianlong-3-fails-in-first-flight>

<https://partofstyle.com/tianlong-3-stumbles-on-debut-dealing-a-blow-to-chinas-spacex-challenger/>

Commented [U2]:

Breaking Up is All Too Easy to Do





Credit: HEO Robotics

On March 30, SpaceX's Starlink division announced that it lost contact with a satellite on March 29 and was trying to locate space debris produced by whatever unknown event caused the breakup. LeoLabs, operator of a radar network that can track objects in LEO, said in an X post that it "detected a fragment creation event involving SpaceX Starlink 34343. LeoLabs Global Radar Network immediately detected tens of objects in the vicinity of the satellite after the event, with a first pass over our radar site in the Azores, Portugal. Additional fragments may have been produced—analysis is ongoing."

Articles: <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2026/03/starlink-satellite-breaks-apart-into-tens-of-objects-spacex-confirms-anomaly/>

That's All, Folks



Credit: NASA/Reid Wiseman