August 2026

Update

Oklahoma Space Alliance

A Chapter of The
National Space Society

A free email newsletter of the Oklahoma Space Alliance

Lightning Hits a Long March-3B

Credit: Zhou Quan/VCG via Getty Images

August 2026 OSA Meeting

Saturday, August 8, 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

"Be thankful for problems. If they were less difficult, someone with less ability might have your job." – Jim Lovell

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Update

August 8, 2026

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The *Oklahoma Space Alliance Update* is a bi-monthly newsletter of the Oklahoma Space Alliance a chapter of the National Space Society, a non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. The address of **OSA** is **102 W. Linn, #1, Norman, OK 73071**.

Articles may be submitted by U.S. mail or electronically. Articles may be sent to the Editor at 121 South Creekdale Drive, Norman, OK 73072 or to david.sheely51@gmail.com. Each submission should include the author's name and either e-mail address or phone number (for verification only). A text or Microsoft Word file is preferred. Please contact the Editor by phone, e-mail or texting before mailing your information.

Credit: SpaceX

Starship Flight 13 on July 24 went beautifully. It ended with Ship 40 making so soft a landing in the Indian Ocean that it didn't sink, enabling SpaceX to recover the upper stage for close examination for the first time. SpaceX tentatively plans a tower catch of Ship on Flight 14.

Articles: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/spacexs-starship-megarocket-makes-the-softest-splashdown-ever-after-launching-next-gen-starlink-satellites-in-flight-13-test-video

https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/spacex-eyes-tower-catch-for-next-starship-after-auspicious-end-to-13th-flight/

https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/spacex-starship-still-floating-5-days-after-flight-space-photo-of-the-day-for-july-29-2026

India Joins the Commercial Launcher Club

Credit: Skyroot Aerospace

On July 18, India became just the third country with a private orbital launch capability Skyroot Aerospace's Vikram-1 rocket reached LEO on its first attempt. This achievement follows the company's 2018 milestone, when its Vikram-S suborbital rocket became the first private Indian outfit ever to reach space.

Articles: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/skyroot-aerospace-india-first-private-orbital-launch-vikram-1

https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/indias-first-privately-developed-rocket-reaches-orbit-on-dramatic-debut-launch/

https://spacedaily.com/sd-on-july-18-2026-skyroot-aerospaces-vikram-1-became-the-first-privately-developed-indian-rocket-to-reach-orbit-from-sriharikota-after-a-35-minute-hold-the-visible-result-of-six-years-o/

Japan, Too

Credit: JAXA

On July 11, for 40 seconds, Japan's RV-X experimental reusable rocket prototype took flight for the first time.

Article: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/another-reusable-rocket-coming-japan-launches-lands-rv-x-prototype-video

https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/science-nature/technology/20260711-337757/

https://www.yahoo.com/news/science/articles/japans-space-agency-conducts-first-015454379.html?fr=yhssrp_catchall

More, More, More!

Credit: Relativity Space

A new study finds that, in 2024 U.S. dollars, launch costs have dropped by 96% of the price in 1960. In those early days the average cost of sending 1 kg to orbit was $87,023; now it costs “only” $3,868. Keep it up, boys! That’s the kind of decline we like to see.

Articles: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/rocket-launch-costs-have-dropped-96-percent-since-1960-how-low-can-they-go

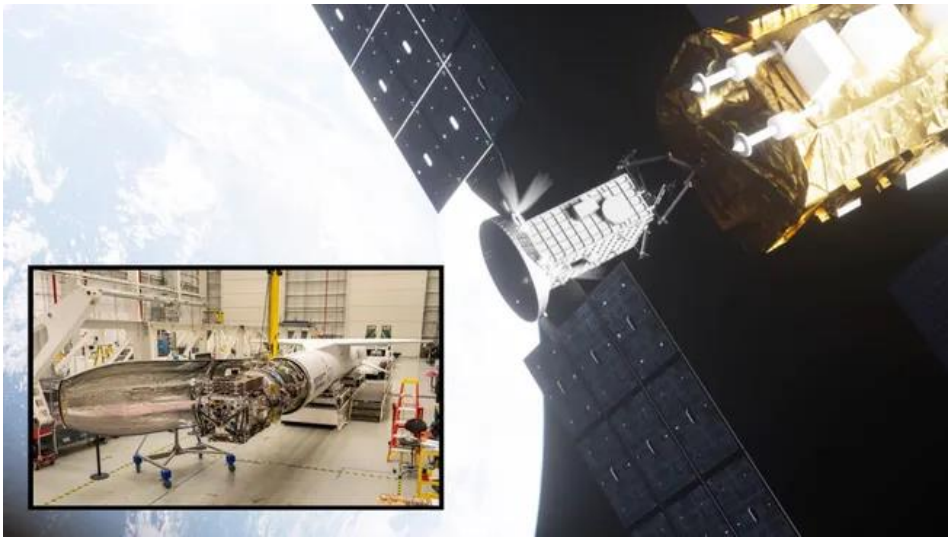
Trouble With the Natives

Credit: SpaceX

Some folks don’t like the deal SpaceX made with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), giving SpaceX 727 acres (294 hectares) of public land that's currently part of the Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuge in exchange for 683 acres (276 hectares) of SpaceX land in the area, not all of it contiguous. A coalition of conservation and tribal groups has sued the USFWS over the swap, and on July 20, they filed an emergency injunction, asking a federal judge to stop the exchange until the courts can rule on the case.

Article: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/the-court-has-to-intervene-now-indigenous-groups-and-conservationists-condemn-spacexs-south-texas-land-swap

The Rescue is In Trouble



Credit: NASA/Katalyst Space

Per NASA on July 28, "Katalyst's LINK servicing spacecraft experienced issues with attitude control, causing the spacecraft to spin and resulting in sporadic communications."

Articles: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/nasa-launched-this-spacecraft-to-save-a-satellite-now-it-needs-saving-too

https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/08/heres-how-engineers-plan-to-save-the-satellite-sent-to-save-nasas-swift-mission/

https://www.space.com/space-exploration/launches-spacecraft/engineers-race-to-save-stricken-link-rescue-spacecraft-before-its-too-late

Never Give Up, Never Surrender!

Credit: John Kraus/NASA

NASA astronaut and Expedition 75 crewmember Anil Menon was rejected four times by NASA while he was a NASA flight surgeon. He and his wife Anna went to work at SpaceX for several years, working with Crew Dragon. Anna flew on Polaris Dawn with Jared Isaacman. Now they're both back at NASA, both astronauts; Anil got his first ride to orbit on a Soyuz out of Baikonur on July 26. "Few have ever worked harder in their life to chase their dream," said Isaacman, on hand at the launch and speaking both as Menon's friend and now his boss. "No one has earned this more."

Articles: https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/a-most-improbable-astronaut-just-went-to-space/

A Great Loss for Humanity

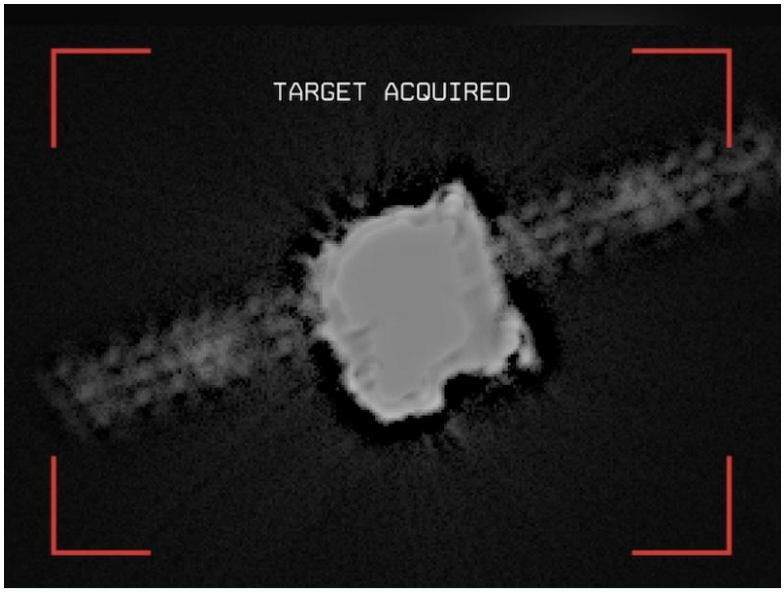
Credit: Blue Origin

Wally Funk became the oldest person to fly into space in 2021, at age 82, with Jeff Bezos (and the youngest person to fly to space, 18-year-old Oliver Daemen) aboard New Shepard's first human suborbital spaceflight. It was 60 years after she and 12 other women sought the same opportunity as NASA's original astronauts; she was the last living member of the First Lady Astronaut Trainees (FLATs, or as they were dubbed by the media, the Mercury 13). She died on July 8 at 87 years old. At least she made it to space, even if only for a few minutes. As anyone who ever met her even briefly can attest, she deserved much more.

Articles: https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/wally-funk-last-of-mercury-13-and-oldest-woman-in-space-dies-at-87/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wally_Funk

Dogfight, Simulated



Credit: Rocket Lab

Rocket Lab launched its Puma satellite on June 19 as part of Victus Haze. Part One of the exercise was rapid response, which was achieved with a launch less than 17 hours after RL got the call. Part Two involves Puma intercepting an active target, True Anomaly's Jackal satellite. The Space Force's criteria for success were to complete the rendezvous and photograph the target in less than 84 hours; Rocket Lab did the job in less than 59 hours. On July 14, True Anomaly and Rocket Lab received orders for Mission 2 of Victus Haze; their satellites were to pursue and evade one another over and over again.

Article: https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/space-force-backed-mission-does-its-best-impression-of-top-gun-in-orbit/

Louisiana Latest SpaceX Launch Site

Credit: SpaceX

SpaceX and the state of Louisiana are close to finalizing a deal for the launch company to acquire about 130,000 acres along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico.

Articles: https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/08/spacex-is-set-to-acquire-130000-acres-of-marshland-in-southern-louisiana/

Still in the Game

Credit: Boeing

"The redesign of the Starliner deficiencies is going quite well, and we're feeling pretty good about that," Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg told listeners on the quarterly earnings call on July 28. It's possible that Starliner launches before the end of this year; an official confirmed to Ars Technica that the primary factor now for when it can go is port availability on ISS.

Article: https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/actually-starliner-might-fly-into-space-this-year/

Russia Needs China Tech

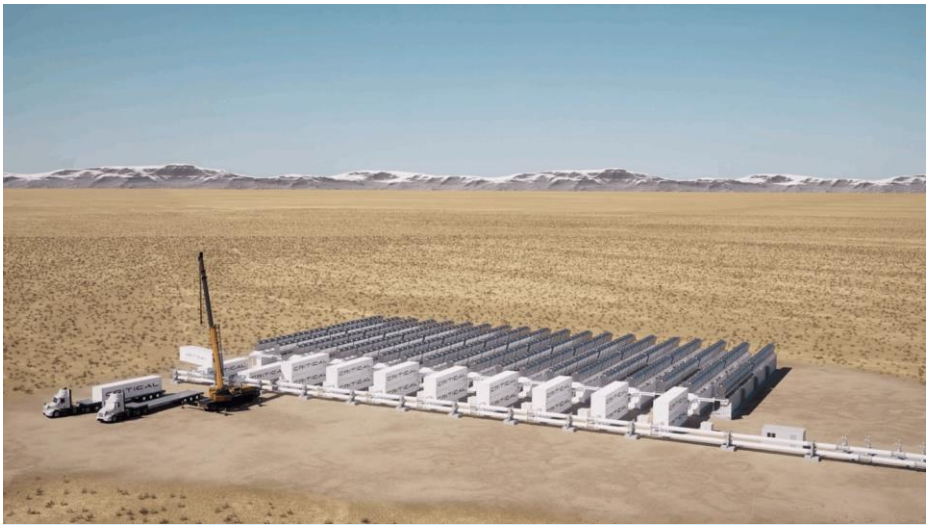
Credit: Wikipedia

Russia wants to quadruple production of Angara launch vehicles, used to place Ministry of Defense satellites into orbit. This effort relies heavily on Chinese-made industrial technology. Sadly, our own space supply chain also shows dependence on China.

Article: https://united24media.com/investigations/russia-wants-to-quadruple-military-space-rocket-production-leaked-files-show-its-counting-on-chinese-machinery-21292

https://spacenews.com/report-finds-u-s-space-supply-chains-rely-heavily-on-chinese-manufacturing/

Rocket Engine Repurposing



Credit: Critical Energy

Critical Energy, a new company co-founded in 2024 by former SpaceX engineer Spencer Jackson, has secured $22M in a major funding round to repurpose rocket engines for ultra-deep geothermal drilling.

Articles: https://techcrunch.com/2026/06/17/spacex-alum-nabs-22m-to-turn-rocket-engines-into-geothermal-power-plants/

https://varenyaz.com/news/spacex-alum-rocket-engines-geothermal-power/

Commented [U1]:

Even Portugal

Credit: Atlantic Spaceport Consortium

The Portuguese Space Agency was founded in 2019. Now it wants to develop a spaceport in the Azores.

Articles: https://www.dw.com/en/space-race-why-portugal-is-reaching-for-the-stars/a-77303795

The Curves Will Cross

Credit: Fram2/SpaceX

In the first decade of this millennium, six more private citizens followed Dennis Tito's 2001 flight to ISS with space flights of their own. Then came a long hiatus. From 2009 to 2021, no private citizen reached space at all. But beginning with the first flights of Blue Origin and Virgin Galactic in 2021, space tourism took off. Today, the 120+ flown space tourists represent roughly one-sixth of all the human beings who have ever reached space, and the rate at which citizens are reaching space is now greater than the rate at which new professional astronauts are getting their space wings.

Article: https://spacedaily.com/d-approximately-120-private-civilians-have-now-flown-to-space-aboard-commercial-rockets-roughly-one-sixth-of-all-the-human-beings-who-have-ever-left-earth-and-the-rate-at-which-citiz/

First, the Good News…

Credit: Voyager Technologies

On July 10, NASA finally (finally!) issued its RFP for commercial space stations. The bad news: it contains an estimated 3,000+ requirements. The potential bidders were hoping for hundreds.

Article: https://arstechnica.com/space/2026/07/nasa-finally-releases-a-critical-planning-document-for-private-space-stations/

https://www.techtimes.com/articles/319946/20260708/commercial-space-station-race-nasa-draft-rfp-sets-2029-crewed-flight-deadline.htm

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Getting Out the Vote

Credit: Astronauts for America Facebook page

This past year, a group of retired NASA astronauts banded together as part of a non-profit, non-partisan (?) activist organization called Astronauts for America. Now, the group has announced they're hitting the road on a campaign tour of colleges called "Vote for Freedom."

Articles: https://www.space.com/space-exploration/human-spaceflight/nasas-retired-astronauts-are-hitting-the-road-to-get-young-people-to-vote-one-small-step-for-you-and-one-giant-leap-for-our-country

That’s All, Folks

Credit: SpaceX