

Anomaly ends DART spacecraft mission early

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The Demonstration of Autonomous Rendezvous Technology (DART) spacecraft that was successfully launched Friday at 10:25 a.m. PDT from Vandenberg Air Force Base, Calif., experienced an on orbit anomaly late Friday. The \$110 million DART mission ended unexpectedly when it detected a fuel problem. DART launch has been scheduled for last fall, but was postponed several times.

After a successful rendezvous, acquisition of the target spacecraft, and approach to within approximately 300 feet, DART placed itself in the retirement phase before completing all planned proximity operations, ending the mission prematurely.

NASA is convening a mishap investigation board to determine the reason for the DART spacecraft anomaly.

DART was an experimental spacecraft designed to test technologies that would permit spacecraft to approach other spacecraft without human intervention. While previous rendezvous and docking efforts have been piloted by astronauts, the DART spacecraft completed the rendezvous and acquisition with no human intervention, relying on a variety of sensors and analyses to complete these functions.

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