

KickSat nearing launch date despite another delay

March 14 2014, by Bob Yirka



(Phys.org) —The KickSat project is getting very close to a launch date. Originally scheduled to go up Sunday March 16th, the Kickstarter project organized by Zachary Manchester, has been postponed. It is now scheduled to be boosted into space by a SpaceX rocket sometime between March 30 and April 2.

The KickSat project is as much a concept as a physical entity, it consists of a box that looks like a CD jukebox (it's also about the same size) and holds what are called Sprites—small (about the size of a saltine cracker and weighing just 5 grams) flat satellites. Once in space, the KickSat will spin around and eject the 104 Sprites it will be carrying, where they will operate independently 200 miles above the Earth for a few days to possibly a week before burning up upon reentry. The project is an attempt to give [ordinary people](#) access to [space science](#) by allowing for launching very tiny, inexpensive satellites, with costs spread across hundreds of others that are nearly identical to it.

The KickSat project was first launched in 2011 as a Kickstarter project, and received more than double its goal of \$30,000. Backers got their names engraved on one of the KickSat panels (which have been published on the Kickstarter page) and if they donated enough, their own Sprite. Owners were given firmware development kits to allow for programming functionality.

The KickSat will be sent into space in a Dragon capsule aboard a SpaceX rocket (the rest of the cargo will go on to the International Space Station). Shortly after liberation from its capsule, KickSat will begin spinning freely in space and turning on its radios. Sometime later the Sprites will be spun off into space where they will begin performing whatever they have been individually programmed to do. Each will have a gyro, a magnetometer, solar collectors, radio, sensors and a chip to run preprogrammed code. Data from each Sprite will be broadcast back to Earth on a shared radio frequency—each has been programmed to wake-up, perform its work, then go back to sleep, on a random time-table to reduce the number of Sprites talking at the same time. Anyone who wishes to do so can purchase a small amount of equipment (antenna, noise amplifier, software, etc.) to listen in as well. Those on the [project](#) will be listening and collecting data from a site in Ithaca, New York.

More information: [www.kickstarter.com/projects/z ... craft-in-space/posts](http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/z...craft-in-space/posts)

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