

New NASA photos show massive rocket explosion in Virginia

November 5 2015



This Tuesday Oct 28, 2014 photo provided by NASA shows the Orbital Antares rocket, after it suffered a catastrophic anomaly moments after launch at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. The Cygnus spacecraft was filled with supplies slated for the International Space Station, including science experiments, experiment hardware, spare parts, and crew provisions. (Joel Kowsky/NASA via AP)

The launch of an unmanned commercial supply rocket on the eastern

shore of Virginia was supposed to be a moment of celebration. Crowds gathered to watch as the sun set. Hundreds of miles up, astronauts huddled around a live video feed in anticipation.

But aerospace company Orbital Sciences Corp.'s Antares rocket, bound for the International Space Station, exploded six seconds after [liftoff](#) on Oct. 28, 2014, marking the first catastrophic launch in NASA's commercial spaceflight effort.

More than a year after the blast, NASA released images last week showing the fiery explosion that lit up the sky and sent scorched wreckage flying.

NASA's independent review team said last week that the initial fire was caused by friction from rubbing parts in a turbopump in one of the rocket's old Russian-built engines. The pump exploded seconds after liftoff, damaging a second engine, according to NASA's report. As the rocket fell toward the ground, controllers sent a destruct signal just before impact to minimize damage.

Orbital Sciences was hired by NASA to deliver food, clothes and equipment to astronauts in the International Space Station. No one was injured in the blast, but the \$200 million mission and the Wallops Island launch complex were ruined.



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Citation: New NASA photos show massive rocket explosion in Virginia (2015, November 5)
retrieved 26 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2015-11-nasa-photos-massive-rocket-explosion.html>

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