

FACT CHECK: Trump's made-in-US (and Europe) spacecraft

July 24 2018, by Calvin Woodward And Seth Borenstein



An Orion crew module, part of NASA's Space Launch System (SLS), is on display on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington at the "Made in America", product showcase featuring items created in each of the U.S. 50 states, Monday, July 23, 2018. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais)

One of the star products of President Donald Trump's Made in America showcase this year, NASA's Orion crew capsule, will ride through space thanks to Europe.

With its four solar-array wings, the European Service Module supplies propulsion, power and the essentials of life for the capsule's space travels and marks a departure for NASA that Trump did not mention at Monday's event celebrating American manufacturing.

"For the first time," the agency says, "NASA will use a European-built system as a critical element to power an American [spacecraft](#)." Airbus, Boeing's prime competitor in [commercial air travel](#), leads an array of European companies that made the service module.

The actual Orion crew capsule, made by Lockheed as the prime contractor with more than 1,000 companies across the U.S. contributing, sat on the South Lawn of the White House as one of most striking exhibits of products made in the U.S. The multinational nature of space industry and exploration—and of the spacecraft itself—went unacknowledged.

"On the South Lawn, you have the [space capsule](#)," Trump said. "And every part is made right here, in America."

His only reference to Europe was in the context of the trade war he is pursuing. "The European Union's been very tough on the United States," he said, adding "we'll have to do something" to curb imports of European cars if negotiations don't work out.

The globalization of manufacturing has made it difficult to isolate products entirely made in the U.S. Vehicles typically have some or many foreign parts, for example, and in a long-integrated auto manufacturing industry, Canadian-built vehicles may be counted as domestic by the U.S.

In his Made in America event last year, Trump posed by a Boeing jet that was 30 percent foreign-made.

For purposes of the showcase, the White House cites a standard of the Federal Trade Commission that defines a U.S.-made product as having no or negligible foreign content and as going through final assembly or processing in the country. Additionally, the White House says it only selects products from companies that are American owned and operated.

Under those criteria, it appears the Orion crew capsule that was on the display meets the made-in-U.S. standard. But the spacecraft, exhibited as a model at Monday's event, would not.

NASA counts the European module as one of three primary elements of the spacecraft. The crew module and launch abort system are the others.

"Orion's service module is the powerhouse of the spacecraft, supplying it with the electricity, propulsion, thermal control, air and water it needs in space," NASA says. "After the Space Launch System rocket gives Orion the push it needs to venture toward deep space and detaches from it, the [service module](#) will propel the uncrewed spacecraft on its mission 40,000 miles (64,000 kilometers) beyond the moon and help it return to Earth, detaching before the crew module re-enters Earth's atmosphere."

The Trump administration envisages a test launch without a [crew](#) in 2020 and Orion's first crewed mission three years later. Orion is designed to replace the space shuttle in time and take humans into deeper [space](#).

© 2018 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: FACT CHECK: Trump's made-in-US (and Europe) spacecraft (2018, July 24) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-07-fact-trump-made-in-us-europe-spacecraft.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.