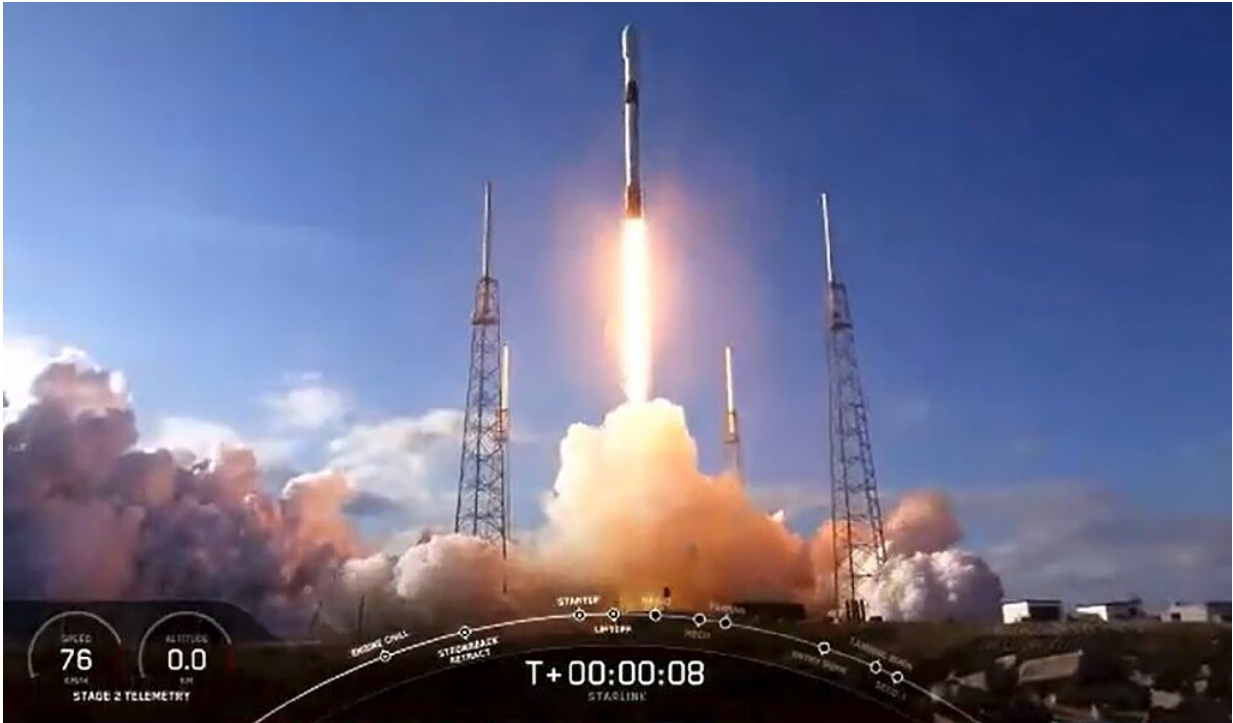


SpaceX re-useable rocket misses landing ship

February 17 2020



This NASA TV video frame grab shows the SpaceX Falcon 9 fourth Starlink constellation as it launches at Cape Canaveral, Florida on January 29, 2020

SpaceX successfully launched its latest cluster of high-speed internet satellites into orbit Monday but was unable to land its rocket booster on an autonomous ship, missing a key milestone.

The [private company](#) founded by billionaire Elon Musk has revolutionized spaceflight in recent years by developing rockets capable

of delivering their payload in space then flying back to Earth and landing upright on a target zone, ready to be-reused.

It has successfully landed its booster 49 times previously and Monday's [mission](#) would have been the 50th.

"We had an on-time liftoff this morning, a good stage separation, first stage made its way back to Earth," manufacturing engineer Jessica Anderson said during a live feed of the mission, which launched from Cape Canaveral, Florida at 10:05am (1505 GMT).

"Unfortunately, we did not land the [first stage](#) on our drone ship, but it did make a [soft landing](#) on the water right next to the drone ship, so it does look like it might be in one piece," she added.

The mission delivered the fifth load of 60 satellites of SpaceX's broadband Starlink constellation, part of its plans to control a huge share of the future internet space market.

There are now around 300 Starlink satellites in orbit and that number could one day grow to thousands.

Several rivals have the same ambition, including London-based startup OneWeb and giant US retailer Amazon, whose Project Kuiper is far less advanced.

These have sparked concern among astronomers that they could obscure our view of the night sky, both visually and through radio interference.

Re-using rockets drastically lowers the cost of missions, and the Falcon 9 used in Monday's launch was being flown for the fourth time.

It was not immediately clear why it missed its target. The rocket did not

appear in the frame in live footage broadcast from the drone ship, but a plume of smoke or vapor was seen a short distance away.

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Citation: SpaceX re-useable rocket misses landing ship (2020, February 17) retrieved 4 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-02-spacex-re-useable-rocket-ship.html>

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