

Musk, Bezos win NASA contracts for Moon lander

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Jeff Bezos, owner of Blue Origin, introduces a new lunar landing module called Blue Moon during an event at the Washington Convention Center, May 9, 2019 in Washington, DC

NASA on Thursday awarded almost \$1 billion in contracts to three space companies including those owned by Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos to develop lunar landers as the United States seeks to return human beings to the Moon.

The human landing system contracts were given to Musk's SpaceX, Bezos' Blue Origin and Dynetics, who receive \$967 million.

The three will compete against each other over the contract period, ending February 2021, when NASA will decide which of them will have an opportunity to perform demonstration missions.

"America is moving forward with the final step needed to land astronauts on the Moon by 2024, including the incredible moment when we will see the first woman set foot on the lunar surface," said NASA Administrator Jim Bridenstine.

"This is the first time since the Apollo era that NASA has direct funding for a human landing system, and now we have companies on contract to do the work for the Artemis program."

The human landing system is one of the core elements of the Artemis mission, along with the Space Launch System rocket, the Orion crew capsule headed by Lockheed Martin, and the Gateway, a small space station that will orbit the Moon.

The announcement comes as the world grapples with the coronavirus pandemic, which has killed almost 230,000 people since it first emerged in China late last year, and has ground the [global economy](#) to a halt.

Bridenstine said it was more important than ever for the mission to go forward.

"I want to say that it's important that this agency do this now, because our country, and in fact the whole world has been shaken by this coronavirus pandemic," said Bridenstine.

"And yet, we need to give people hope. We need to give them something that they can look up to, dream about, something that will inspire not just the nation but the entire world."

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