

Rocket test launch for Space Force fails to reach orbit

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Astra Space Inc. failed to reach orbit in its rocket launch Saturday, the latest setback for the maker of small rockets used to send satellites into space.

The company's 45-foot tall rocket took off unsteadily from a pad at the

Pacific Spaceport Complex in Alaska, flew for more than 2 minutes and then suffered what Astra described as "technical difficulties."

The machine was carrying a test payload for the U.S. Space Force. Astra had its most successful launch in December, when its [rocket](#) reached space and then just missed reaching orbit.

Based in Alameda, California, Astra competes with industry leader Rocket Lab USA Inc., which has completed almost two dozen flights dating back to 2017 and is now busy working on a larger vehicle. Virgin Orbit, a private Richard Branson venture separate from Virgin Galactic, completed its first commercial mission in June.

Astra shares jumped 21% last week, after tumbling in July. The company, which recently went public via a special purpose acquisition [company](#) run by telecommunications billionaire Craig McCaw, said it had gathered valuable data from the flight and has more rockets ready to test again soon.

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