

# Amazon signs on launch partners for space internet

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Amazon on Tuesday announced deals for scores of launches to deploy a "constellation" of satellites in low orbit around the Earth to provide internet service to people below.

Amazon said that its contracts with Arianespace, Blue Origin and United Launch Alliance (ULA) are the largest commercial procurement of launch vehicles in history.

The overall cost and timing of launches booked to make Amazon's Project Kuiper a reality were not disclosed.

"We still have lots of work ahead, but the team has continued to hit milestone after milestone across every aspect of our satellite system," Amazon senior vice president Dave Limp said in a statement.

"Project Kuiper will provide fast, affordable broadband to tens of millions of customers in unserved and underserved communities around the world."

US billionaire Elon Musk, head of the space company SpaceX, has already put more than 1,500 satellites into orbit to create a Starlink internet service network.

Late last year Boeing entered the space internet race, getting US authorization for satellites that will provide [internet services](#) from above.

Project Kuiper aims to provide high-speed broadband internet service to households, schools, hospitals, businesses, disaster relief operations and others in places without reliable connectivity, according to Amazon.

Amazon is developing Kuiper in-house, and planned to take advantage of capabilities already present in its other divisions, such as logistics operations and AWS cloud computing arm.

Musk formed an alliance with Microsoft, which is Amazon's biggest rival in the cloud computing market, to use its Azure platform to provide his version of satellite-powered [internet service](#).

With some of Amazon's launch contracts awarded to Blue Origin, one Bezos operation will be feeding business to another.

Bezos has used some of his Amazon wealth to create and fund private space exploration enterprise Blue Origin.

"We're honored to support Amazon's ambitious mission to provide reliable, affordable broadband to unserved and underserved communities around the world," Blue Origin senior vice president Jarrett Jones said in a joint release.

## **Rocket booster**

It was Amazon's plan from the outset to enlist multiple rocket launch companies, according to Project Kuiper vice president of technology Rajeev Badyal.

The approach reduces risk of launch delays slowing the project, and saves Amazon money with competitive pricing, according to Badyal.

"These large, heavy-lift rockets also mean we can deploy more of our constellation with fewer launches, helping simplify our launch and deployment schedule," Badyal said.

The massive number of launch bookings was also expected to boost that industry in the US and Europe.

Badyal gave the example of Arianespace relying on suppliers from 13 European countries to produce its Ariane 6 rockets.

Eighteen of the contracted launches will employ Ariane 6 rockets.

"This contract, the largest we've ever signed, is a great moment in

Arianespace's history," Arianespace chief executive Stephane Israel said in the release.

"It is a major win for the European launcher industry."

ULA won the largest share of contracts and planned to build a second launch platform at its site in Cape Canaveral, Florida as part of the arrangement.

That joint venture is operated by US giants Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

"This agreement marks the beginning of an exciting new era for ULA and for the entire US launch industry," said ULA chief executive Tory Bruno.

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