

Weather clears as SpaceX knocks out overnight satellite launch

May 29 2023, by Richard Tribou



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

After a week of stormy weather delays, SpaceX waited just a bit longer but managed an early Saturday liftoff of a satellite to knock out the Space Coast's 26th launch of the year.

A Falcon 9 carrying the Arabsat BADR-8 telecommunications satellite headed for [geosynchronous orbit](#) let the winds die down from the opening of the launch window late Friday, but managed to blast off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station's Space Launch Complex 40 at 12:30 a.m. a little over an hour later.

It was the fourth night launch for SpaceX this month with three previous successful Starlink missions from Cape Canaveral lighting up the sky in the wee hours.

The first-stage booster made its 14th flight with a recovery on SpaceX's dronship Just Read the Instructions down range in the Atlantic Ocean. It was the 195th time the company has recovered a booster from its rockets.

This was the second launch SpaceX has done for Arabsat following what was the first Falcon Heavy launch with a customer in 2019. SpaceX has a third launch contracted for what will be the first of Arabsat's seventh-generation satellites. The company primarily provides communications for the Middle East and North Africa, but has expanded into Europe and Central Asia.

SpaceX's busy year includes now 25 of the 26 launches from the Space Coast so far with the only other one coming from Relativity Space and its 3D-printed Terran 1 rocket. It was its fifth in May from the Space Coast, while its busiest month was in March with seven liftoffs.

The combined launches from Canaveral and KSC saw a record 57 orbital rockets from all companies fly in 2022 with SLD 45 commander Maj. Gen. Stephen Purdy reporting earlier this year the Space Coast could see up to 92 launches in 2023.

The Arabsat launch became SpaceX's 20th from Cape Canaveral this

year with another six flown from Kennedy Space Center including the recent crewed launch of the Axiom Space Ax-2 [mission](#) to the International Space Station, which has a planned return to splash down off the coast of Florida next week with undocking slated for Tuesday morning.

The company has also flown 10 times from California's Vandenberg Space Force Base for a combined 35 during a year that company CEO Elon Musk said might see as many as 100 across all of its launch complexes. It also attempted a suborbital flight of its in-development Starship and Super Heavy this year, but that ended with the rocket self-destructing before reaching space.

The company still has several high-profile launches with its active stable of Falcon 9 and Falcon Heavy rockets this year including three more possible crewed launches from KSC. That includes the private Polaris Dawn mission commanded by billionaire Jared Isaacman, who flew to space on the Inspiration4 mission.

Now targeting this summer, Polaris Dawn will be an orbital mission that aims to perform the first private tethered spacewalk. Slated for mid-August is the next replacement crew for the International Space Station on Crew-7, and a third Axiom Space mission to the ISS could fly as early as November.

SpaceX has at least three more Falcon Heavy missions on tap this year as well including its third Space Force mission USSF-52 targeting this summer and the launch of the delayed NASA Psyche probe in October.

NASA won't be back in the launch business with its Space Launch System rocket for the Artemis II mission until late 2024, and the only other regular launch provider from the Space Coast—United Launch Alliance—has yet to fly in 2023, but it has several missions expected to

fly this year after a series of delays.

That includes the second-to-last mission for its Delta IV Heavy on the NROL-68 mission for the U.S. Space Force's Space Systems Command and the National Reconnaissance Office delayed from April now targeting June 21; an Atlas V launch on the first crewed flight of the Boeing CST-100 Starliner to the ISS as early as July 21 also delayed from April; and the first-ever flight of its new rocket Vulcan Centaur with the Astrobotic Peregrine [lunar lander](#) on the Certification-1 mission delayed from May, but without a target launch date beyond June or July, according to ULA CEO and President Tory Bruno.

©2023 Orlando Sentinel.

Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Citation: Weather clears as SpaceX knocks out overnight satellite launch (2023, May 29)
retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2023-05-weather-spacex-overnight-satellite.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.