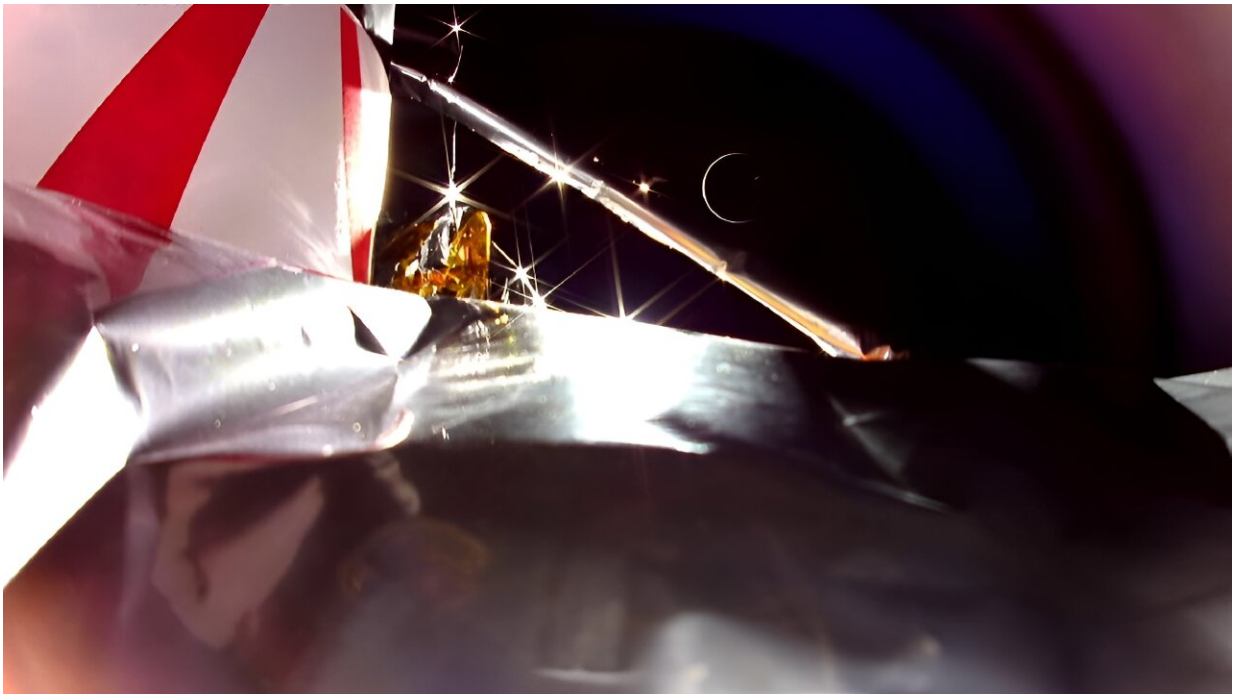


US spaceship lost over S. Pacific following failed Moon mission

January 19 2024, by Issam AHMED



Astrobotic posted on social media a photograph taken by its spaceship on its final day, revealing the Earth's crescent as the Peregrine lander positioned itself between the Sun and our planet.

A crippled American spaceship has been lost over a remote region of the South Pacific, probably burning up in the atmosphere in a fiery end to its failed mission to land on the Moon.

Astrobotic's Peregrine lander was launched on January 8 under an experimental new partnership between NASA and private industry intended to reduce costs for American taxpayers and seed a lunar economy.

But it experienced an explosion shortly after separating from its rocket and had been leaking fuel, damaging its outer shell as well as making it impossible to reach its destination.

In its latest update, Astrobotic posted on X that it had lost contact with its spacecraft shortly before 2100 GMT Thursday, mid-morning on Friday in the local time zone, indicating a "controlled re-entry over open water" as it had predicted.

The Pittsburgh-based company added it would await independent confirmation of Peregrine's fate from the relevant government authorities. A previous update provided atmospheric re-entry coordinates a few hundred miles (kilometers) south of Fiji, albeit with a wide margin of error.

Engineers had executed a series of small engine burns to position the boxy, golf cart-sized robot over the ocean to "minimize the risk of debris reaching land."

Astrobotic also tweeted a photograph taken by the spaceship on its final day, revealing the Earth's crescent as it positioned itself between the Sun and our planet.

Peregrine operated for over 10 days in space, exciting enthusiasts even after it became clear Astrobotic would not succeed in its goal to be the first company to achieve a controlled touchdown on the Moon—and the first American soft landing since the end of the Apollo era, more than five decades ago.

NASA had paid the company more than \$100 million under the Commercial Lunar Payload Services (CLPS) program to ship its science instruments to the Moon, as it prepares to send American astronauts back to the barren world later this decade under the Artemis program.

Astrobotic also carried more colorful cargo on behalf of private clients, such as the DNA and cremated remains of some 70 people, including Star Trek creator Gene Roddenberry and sci-fi author Arthur C. Clarke.

Though it hasn't worked out this time, NASA officials have made clear their strategy of "more shots on goal" means more chances to score. The next attempt under CLPS, by Houston-based Intuitive Machines, launches in February.

The Japanese [space](#) agency's "Moon Sniper," which launched in September, will be the next spaceship to attempt a soft lunar touchdown, a notoriously difficult feat, shortly after midnight Japan time on Saturday (1500 GMT on Friday).

If it succeeds, Japan will be the fifth nation to complete the achievement, after the Soviet Union, United States, China and India.

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