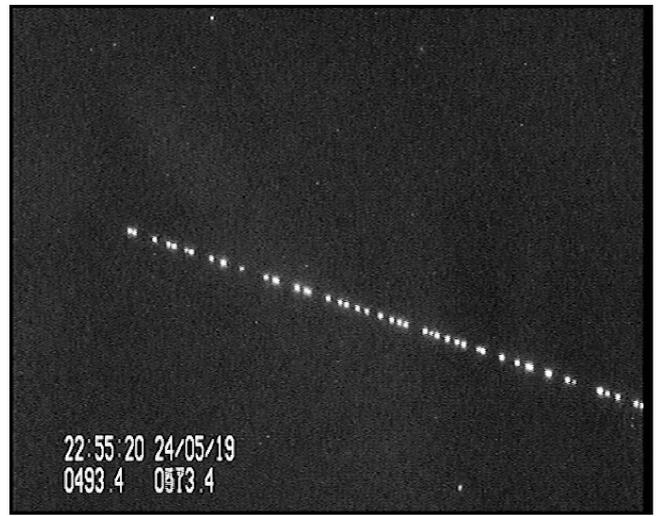


Wow! The SpaceX Starlink satellite train

SpaceX has launched its first 60 Starlink satellites into orbit on Thursday, May 23, 2019. It plans to launch nearly 12,000 of these satellites; from low-Earth orbit, they'll beam internet coverage to the world. This series of 60 satellites is the first of many that will create a large constellation of satellites meant to provide global internet access. It resulted in a spectacular view over northwestern Europe, when a 'train' of bright satellites, all moving close together in a line, moved across the sky. The objects were launched into a ~440 km altitude, 53 degree inclined orbit. Using their ion thrusters, they will raise their orbits to ~550 km the coming days/weeks.



SpaceX Starlink objects train May 24, 2019

Space Exploration Technologies Corp., doing business as SpaceX, is a private American aerospace manufacturer and space transportation services company headquartered in Hawthorne, California. It was founded in 2002 by entrepreneur **Elon Musk** with the goal of reducing space transportation costs and enabling the colonization of Mars. SpaceX has since developed the Falcon launch vehicle family and the Dragon spacecraft family, which both currently deliver payloads into Earth orbit.

SpaceX has flown 16 resupply missions to the International Space Station (ISS) under a partnership with NASA. NASA also awarded SpaceX a further development contract in 2011 to develop and demonstrate a human-rated Dragon, which would be used to transport astronauts to the ISS and return them safely to Earth. SpaceX conducted the maiden launch of its Crew Dragon spacecraft on a NASA-required demonstration flight on March 2, 2019 and is set to launch its first crewed Crew Dragon later in 2019. In December 2015, the first Falcon 9 was flown back to a landing pad near the launch site, where it successfully accomplished a propulsive vertical landing. In March 2017, SpaceX became the first to successfully re-launch and land the first stage of an orbital rocket.

In September 2016, CEO Elon Musk unveiled the mission architecture of the Interplanetary Transport System program, an ambitious privately funded initiative to develop spaceflight technology for use in crewed interplanetary spaceflight. In 2017, Musk unveiled an updated configuration of the system, now named Starship and Super Heavy, which is planned to be fully reusable and will be the largest rocket ever on its debut, capable of lifting 60 tons, currently scheduled for the early 2020s.

In January 2015 Elon Musk announced the development of a new satellite constellation to provide global broadband internet service, with 4,425 satellites capable of beaming the Internet to the entire globe. Owned and operated by SpaceX, the goal of the business is to increase profitability and cashflow, to allow SpaceX to continue and build its proposed Mars colony.

AK, with EarthSky and Wikipedia Notes



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