



## Rocket Lab Partners With U.S. Air Force for Neutron Launch for Re-Entry Mission

May 8, 2025

LONG BEACH, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)--May 8, 2025-- Rocket Lab USA, Inc. (Nasdaq: RKLb) ("Rocket Lab" or "the Company"), a global leader in launch services and space systems, today announced it will launch its new medium-lift reusable rocket Neutron for the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) for a Rocket Cargo mission that supports point-to-point cargo transportation, establishing a new era of commercial launch capability to advance global defense logistics for the nation. The mission is scheduled for a return-to-Earth Neutron launch no earlier than 2026.

The launch contract will see Neutron execute a Rocket Cargo survivability experiment under the AFRL Rocket Experimentation for Global Agile Logistics (REGAL) solicitation, an effort by the Department of Defense to create a rocket-based point-to-point transportation system to quickly and rapidly deliver cargo around the world with commercial launch providers. AFRL's experiment will be launched by Neutron and re-enter Earth's atmosphere, in a demonstration of re-entry capability for future REGAL missions.

Rocket Lab's Neutron medium-lift reusable launch vehicle will provide both government and commercial customers with an alternative and reliable launch service capable of deploying 13,000 kg to low Earth orbit. Neutron is tailored to deploy constellations and national security missions as well as science and exploration payloads. In addition to serving customers with greater affordability in the medium-launch market, Neutron is key to Rocket Lab's strategy as an end-to-end space company preparing to deploy its own constellations and deliver services from space in the future.

Rocket Lab founder and CEO, Sir Peter Beck, says: "Neutron is a powerful new launch option that will set a new standard for performance, affordability, and reliability for government and commercial space users in medium launch. This opportunity for the U.S. Air Force not only helps to advance space logistics, it also demonstrates a high degree of confidence by the DOD in Neutron's capabilities. Anticipation is high for Neutron's inaugural flight this year, and we're excited to showcase Neutron as a platform for R&D for point-to-point logistics for the DoD."

Neutron is strongly positioned to capitalize on the medium-lift launch requirements for future government and commercial missions. Recently Significant progress continues to be made at the rocket's launch pad on Wallops Island, Virginia, with the site's completion expected in the next few weeks. Production, infrastructure scaling, and both Archimedes engine and full-scale components testing is continuing at pace across Rocket Lab's various production and test facilities in the United States. Neutron's debut remains on track for first launch in the second half of 2025.

### About Neutron

Rocket Lab's new reusable medium-lift rocket Neutron is a next-generation challenger to deliver a cost-effective, reliable, and responsive launch service for commercial and government missions. The advanced design of Neutron includes carbon composite for all of the rocket's major structures and an innovative upper stage that enables high-performance for complex satellite deployments, including the deployment of satellite mega-constellations. The Neutron launch vehicle is a reusable launch vehicle leveraging the technology and infrastructure pioneered by the Electron launch vehicle, which has launched 63 times to date and provides the US government and commercial customers frequent, affordable access to space. Neutron utilizes a unique design that brings the Stage 1 and payload fairings back to Earth as a single, integrated stage. This maximizes cadence in a 13-ton to orbit reusable performance capability. Neutron is powered by nine Archimedes engines on Stage 1, and one vacuum-optimized Archimedes engine on Stage 2. Neutron operates from Rocket Lab Launch Complex 3 (LC-3) located at Wallops Island, Virginia, from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Spaceport (MARS).

Images: [Neutron | Flickr](#)

### About Rocket Lab

Founded in 2006, Rocket Lab is an end-to-end space company with an established track record of mission success. We deliver reliable launch services, satellite manufacture, spacecraft components, and on-orbit management solutions that make it faster, easier, and more affordable to access space. Headquartered in Long Beach, California, Rocket Lab designs and manufactures the Electron small orbital launch vehicle, a family of flight proven spacecraft, and the Company is developing the large Neutron launch vehicle for constellation deployment. Since its first orbital launch in January 2018, Rocket Lab's Electron launch vehicle has become the second most frequently launched U.S. rocket annually and has delivered 200+ satellites to orbit for private and public sector organizations, enabling operations in national security, scientific research, space debris mitigation, Earth observation, climate monitoring, and communications. Rocket Lab's family of spacecraft have been selected to support NASA missions to the Moon and Mars, as well as the first private commercial mission to Venus. Rocket Lab has three launch pads at two launch sites,

including two launch pads at a private orbital launch site located in New Zealand and a third launch pad in Virginia. To learn more, visit [www.rocketlabusa.com](http://www.rocketlabusa.com).

### **Forward-Looking Statements**

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. We intend such forward-looking statements to be covered by the safe harbor provisions for forward-looking statements contained in Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act") and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended (the "Exchange Act"). All statements contained in this press release other than statements of historical fact, including, without limitation, statements regarding our launch and space systems operations, launch schedule and window, safe and repeatable access to space, Neutron development, operational expansion and business strategy are forward-looking statements. The words "believe," "may," "will," "estimate," "potential," "continue," "anticipate," "intend," "expect," "strategy," "future," "could," "would," "project," "plan," "target," and similar expressions are intended to identify forward-looking statements, though not all forward-looking statements use these words or expressions. These statements are neither promises nor guarantees, but involve known and unknown risks, uncertainties and other important factors that may cause our actual results, performance or achievements to be materially different from any future results, performance or achievements expressed or implied by the forward-looking statements, including but not limited to the factors, risks and uncertainties included in our Annual Report on Form 10-K for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2024, as such factors may be updated from time to time in our other filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC"), accessible on the SEC's website at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov) and the Investor Relations section of our website at [www.rocketlabusa.com](http://www.rocketlabusa.com), which could cause our actual results to differ materially from those indicated by the forward-looking statements made in this press release. Any such forward-looking statements represent management's estimates as of the date of this press release. While we may elect to update such forward-looking statements at some point in the future, we disclaim any obligation to do so, even if subsequent events cause our views to change.

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