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Virgin Orbit Announces ‘Start Me Up’ Mission as Flight Hardware Takes off for Spaceport Cornwall Launch Debut

Manifest complete, flight hardware departs California for the first orbital launch from U.K. soil

LONG BEACH, Calif.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The countdown to Cornwall has begun as Virgin Orbit (Nasdaq: VORB) readies for *Start Me Up*, the newly-titled forthcoming historic launch from the United Kingdom. The launch provider’s carrier aircraft, ground support equipment (GSE), and rocket will depart this week from California following the first round of [now complete](#) wet dress rehearsals. On track for a November launch, *Start Me Up* is led by a joint mission between the U.S. and U.K. governments, launched by Virgin Orbit, the [United Kingdom Space Agency \(UKSA\)](#), [UK Space Command](#), and [Spaceport Cornwall](#).

This press release features multimedia. View the full release here: <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20221010005791/en/>



Start Me Up will be a launch of many firsts: the first orbital launch ever from the United Kingdom; the first international launch for Virgin Orbit, and the first commercial launch from Western Europe. The first of the company’s hardware will begin its transport to Cornwall, U.K. on Sunday October 9th, due to arrive at Spaceport Cornwall on Tuesday October 11th with the GSE and rocket quickly following later in the week.

Dan Hart, CEO of Virgin Orbit, said:

Virgin Orbit Straight Up mission emblem. (Graphic: Business Wire)

“What an incredible honor it is for us to be

part of something as monumental as bringing Britain into the business of launch. Working with our partners across the UK government, we’re starting up a new capability that will serve the people, the economy, and the security of the UK.”

U.K. Minister of Science Nusrat Ghani said: “As we move ever closer to the first satellite launch from U.K. soil, it’s excellent to see the progress being made by Virgin Orbit, Spaceport Cornwall and those across government in delivering this historic mission, the first of its kind in Europe.

“With 47,000 jobs across the U.K., our growing space industry is a vital part of the economy and has an important role to play in catalysing investment, generating growth and prosperity. I’m looking forward to working with this innovative sector and delivering on our National Space Strategy.”

Ian Annett, Deputy CEO at the U.K. Space Agency, said: “Seeing Virgin Orbit’s aircraft take off is an exciting reminder that we are close to the first launch from U.K. soil and first launch of a satellite from Europe. This will be an iconic moment in the history of U.K. space endeavours, so it is fitting that the mission has been named after a song from the Rolling Stones, one of the U.K.’s most iconic bands.”

Air Vice-Marshal Paul Godfrey (Commander, U.K. Space Command), commented: “The completion of the fuelling and pressurisation dress rehearsals in the USA, and the announcement of the mission name and manifest, has started countdown to launch from the U.K. I’ve seen first-hand the hard work and collaboration that has gone into making this happen, and we can now look forward to Virgin Orbit’s arrival in Cornwall. The very first space launch, carrying government and industry satellite payloads, marks Start Me Up as a historic moment for the United Kingdom.

“Developing new launch capabilities will build on the strengths of our space sector and attract companies from around the world to benefit from these commercial opportunities. This will catalyze investment, bring new jobs to communities and organisations right across the U.K., as well as inspiring the next generation of space scientists and engineers.”

Melissa Thorpe, Head of Spaceport Cornwall: “It’s time to Start Us Up! This is a huge moment for us all in Cornwall as the journey to U.K. space launch has officially begun. The mission name and patch reflect and embrace the incredible partnerships between our two countries and teams.”

This will be the fifth consecutive Virgin Orbit launch to carry payloads for both private companies and governmental agencies. The flight manifest, now completely full, includes payloads from seven global customers, a testament to the flexibility and possibilities offered through responsive launch solutions.

The launch service was acquired by the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO) from Virgin Orbit National Systems, a Virgin Orbit U.S. subsidiary serving classified customers, as the first task order on NRO’s Streamlined Launch Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity Contract or “SLIC.” *Start Me Up* manifest includes:

- **IOD-3 AMBER (aka IOD-3)** – Developed by Satellite Applications Catapult (“SA Catapult”) and Horizon Technologies and built by AAC Clyde Space, all based in the U.K. IOD-3 Amber is expected to be the first of more than 20 Amber satellites to provide space-based Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) data to users.
- **Prometheus-2** – Two cubesats owned by the U.K. Ministry of Defense’s (MOD) Defense Science & Technology Laboratory Dstl. These satellites, co-funded with Airbus Defence and Space who are designing them jointly with In-Space Missions, will support MOD science and technology (S&T) activities both in orbit and on the ground through the development of ground systems focused at Dstl’s site near Portsmouth.
- **CIRCE (Coordinated Ionospheric Reconstruction CubeSat Experiment)**– CIRCE is part of a joint mission between the U.K.’s Defense Science and Technology Laboratory and the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory (NRL).
- **DOVER** – Developed by RHEA Group in the UK, it is the company’s first satellite in its 30-year history. The satellite is being co-funded through the European Space Agency’s (ESA) Navigation Program (NAVISP) and built by Open Cosmos of the United Kingdom. DOVER is a SmallSat that was created as a pathfinder for resilient global navigation satellite systems.
- **ForgeStar-0** – Developed by Space Forge of Wales, the satellite is a fully returnable and reusable platform to enable in-space manufacturing. This launch will be the first for the company’s ForgeStar platform and will test future returns from space technology.
- **AMAN** – Oman’s first orbital mission, it is a single earth observation satellite meant to demonstrate the future feasibility of a larger constellation and was developed after a memorandum of understanding among the Sultanate of Oman, Polish Small Satellite manufacturer and operator SatRev, Poland-originated AI data analytics specialists TUATARA, and Omani-based merging technology innovator ETCO. The agreement includes additional planned small satellites, including this, the first in Oman’s history.
- **STORK-6** – STORK-6 is the next installment of Polish Small Satellite manufacturer and operator SatRev’s STORK constellation. Virgin Orbit previously launched two spacecraft in this constellation on a previous launch and looks forward to continuing to launch SatRev’s STORK spacecraft in the future.

The missions of these satellites span a wide range of activities aimed at improving life on planet Earth, including reducing the environmental impact of production; preventing illegal trafficking, smuggling, and terrorism; and a host of national security functions.

Virgin Orbit has been working closely with the United Kingdom’s Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the Royal Air Force (RAF), and the Spaceport Cornwall team to make all necessary preparations for liftoff.

Start Me Up is so named as a tribute to one of the most iconic British rock and roll bands of all time, the Rolling Stones. The hit song debuted on the 1981 album *Tattoo You* and was later released on the *Forty Licks* compilation by Virgin Records in 2002.

About Virgin Orbit

Virgin Orbit (Nasdaq: VORB) operates one of the most flexible and responsive space launch systems ever built. Founded by Sir Richard Branson in 2017, the Company began commercial service in 2021, and has already delivered commercial, civil, national security, and international satellites into orbit. Virgin Orbit’s LauncherOne rockets are designed and manufactured in Long Beach, California, and are air-launched from a modified 747-400

carrier aircraft that allows Virgin Orbit to operate from locations all over the world in order to best serve each customer's needs. Learn more at www.virginorbit.com and visit us on [LinkedIn](#), on Twitter [@virginorbit](#), and on Instagram [@virgin.orbit](#).

Cautionary Statement Regarding Forward-Looking Statements

This press release contains certain forward-looking statements within the meaning of the federal securities laws. These forward-looking statements generally are identified by the words "believe," "project," "expect," "anticipate," "estimate," "intend," "strategy," "future," "opportunity," "plan," "may," "should," "will," "would," "will be," "will continue," "will likely result," and similar expressions. Forward-looking statements are predictions, projections and other statements about future events that are based on current expectations and assumptions and, as a result, are subject to risks and uncertainties. Many factors could cause actual future events to differ materially from the forward-looking statements in this press release, including but not limited to the Company's ability to access sources of capital; its ability to grow market share in the developing space economy; market acceptance of its current and planned products and services and ability to achieve sufficient production volumes, as well as the factors, risks and uncertainties included in the Company's Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the period ended June 30, 2022, as well as in the Company's subsequent filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission (the "SEC"), accessible on the SEC's website at www.sec.gov and the Investor Information section of the Company's website at www.virginorbit.com. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date they are made. Readers are cautioned not to put undue reliance on forward-looking statements, and Virgin Orbit assumes no obligation and does not intend to update or revise these forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events, or otherwise. Virgin Orbit gives no assurance that it will achieve its expectations.

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MEDIA ENQUIRIES:

Alison Patch, Senior Director of Communications

+1-949-616-2504

Alison.patch@virginorbit.com

Amanda Horn, 4media group

+1-775-636-2567

Amanda.horn@4media-group.com

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