A US military exercise in space got underway with barely anyone noticing



That is apparently what happened last week. Rocket Lab had another launch on its schedule for a commercial customer last week, but the company announced a postponement last Tuesday "to conduct additional checkouts," without offering any additional details. Safety notices began to appear on aviation and maritime websites a couple of days later, just hours before the launch window for Victus Haze opened on Friday.

The launch time, estimated to be approximately 6:20 am EDT (10:20 UTC) on Friday, was set to coincide with the passage of the orbit of one of True Anomaly's satellites over New Zealand. True Anomaly's Jackal-0004 satellite launched from California on May 3 on a SpaceX rideshare mission. Publicly available orbit data indicated Rocket Lab's Victus Haze Puma satellite approached within 60 miles (100 km) of the Jackal

satellite just eight hours after launch, according to Jonathan McDowell, an astrophysicist who expertly tracks space activity using open source data.

Based on previous statements from officials, the Victus Haze mission will unfold with additional maneuvers to bring Rocket Lab’s Puma satellite closer to True Anomaly’s Jackal. Eventually, the satellites are expected to switch roles, with Jackal serving as the inspector and Puma acting as the target.

True Anomaly, a Colorado-based company specializing in building highly maneuverable satellites for national security missions, announced last Thursday that its latest Jackal spacecraft had achieved all of its “test objectives” following its arrival in orbit in early May to demonstrate the satellite’s capabilities for “end-to-end uncooperative rendezvous and proximity operations.”

“Jackal has been fully commissioned and is prepared for its next phase of mission,” True Anomaly said, without articulating what the next phase would entail.

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