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#238 MARCH 2025

# Sky at Night

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# MARS A NEW ERA

As NASA's rover enters unexplored territory, the story so far...

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MIRRORLESS CAMERA**

**WHY SATURN'S RINGS WILL  
DISAPPEAR THIS MONTH**

**THE NEW THEORY THAT COULD  
OVERTHROW DARK ENERGY**



▲ The 16 January launch was the seventh Starship test flight and the first for a slightly taller Block 2 version of the upper stage



▲ The skies above Turks and Caicos were streaked with the remains of the upper stage after it exploded, likely due to a fuel leak

# Starship explosion rains down debris

## SpaceX's seventh test launch ends in an eye-catching failure

A shower of sparkling fragments rained down from the sky after SpaceX's seventh test launch of its new Starship vehicle ended in a spectacular explosion.

The largest and most powerful spacecraft ever lifted off from SpaceX's Starbase launch site in Texas on 16 January at 10:37pm GMT (4:37pm CST). Things seemed to be proceeding as planned, with Starship separating from its Super Heavy booster a few minutes

into the flight. However, around eight minutes into the mission, the Starship upper stage stopped transmitting and the engines shut down soon after. Three minutes later, inhabitants of the Turks and Caicos Islands witnessed a fireworks display as the craft exploded overhead.

Though there were no casualties, debris rained down on the islands and a flight diversion was put in place. The Federal Aviation Administration is now

requiring SpaceX to fully investigate what went wrong. It's thought an oxygen leak caused a fire, which led to the 'unscheduled rapid disassembly'.

The booster stage, however, was much more successful. It returned to Starbase, where it was caught by a pair of 'chopstick' mechanical arms – the second time the company has pulled off the manoeuvre.

[www.spacex.com](http://www.spacex.com)