



Aviation Week by Informa Announces Winners for the Inaugural Space Tech Challenge Awards at Space Tech Expo USA

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Aviation Week by Informa

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The space industry celebrated groundbreaking innovation at the inaugural Aviation Week Space Tech Challenge Awards which took place today in partnership with Space Tech Expo USA, this week in Anaheim, Calif.

This landmark event underscores Aviation Week's commitment to advancing space exploration and technology, connecting execution-ready innovations with the government agencies, prime contractors, and commercial operators actively seeking them.

From lunar operations to Mars missions, the space industry faces nearly 200 validated capability gaps. The Aviation Week Space Tech Challenge Awards recognize solutions already in development — prototypes tested and advancing toward deployment — that address these critical challenges.

"We are proud to recognize the Space Tech Challenge Award winners for developing innovative solutions that address critical capability gaps and help accelerate the growth of the space economy," said Greg Hamilton, President of Aviation Week. "Selected from an exceptional field of 16 finalists, these winners exemplify the ingenuity, vision, and technical excellence driving the future of space innovation."

Recognizing Excellence in Space Innovation

This year's winners represent a diverse group of innovators, from aerospace companies and startups to universities and cross-industry pioneers. Their solutions demonstrate clear evidence of progress, market validation, and readiness for implementation.

The Winners

Colonization – Sustainable Human Presence Beyond Earth

- Accurate Atom Inc. — MARS-REACT

Industrialization – Space Resource Utilization & Manufacturing

- Varda Space Industries — W-Series Reentry Capsule

Protection & Defense – Security & Situational Awareness

- Connectical – LiteGuard

Commercialization – New Space Economy Infrastructure

- Blueshift — AeroZero Tapes

University Programs

- University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign — LEAP

Advancing Space Innovation

The Aviation Week Space Tech Challenge Awards are designed to accelerate the deployment of solutions addressing NASA-identified capability gaps. These include innovations in lunar operations, autonomous systems, resource utilization, communications, and space safety.

Applicants were evaluated by a distinguished panel of industry leaders, including representatives from Lockheed Martin, Lanteris Space, Aerospace Corp., ispace Technologies, and the World Innovation Network (WIN).

ABOUT AVIATION WEEK BY INFORMA

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