# Pentagon raises concerns over ULA's delays in meeting satellite launch needs with Vulcan rocket



The Pentagon has expressed concerns about United Launch Alliance's (ULA) ability to meet its satellite launch needs with the development of the new Vulcan rocket. ULA, a joint venture between Boeing and Lockheed Martin, has been a key partner in launching national security satellites but has faced delays with Vulcan's development. Frank Calvelli, Air Force Assistant Secretary, addressed these concerns in a letter to the heads of Boeing’s and Lockheed Martin’s space divisions, urging an independent review of ULA’s capabilities within 90 days.

Calvelli mentioned that military satellite capabilities are currently grounded due to these delays. Despite a successful first launch of Vulcan earlier in the year, a second certification launch necessary for Pentagon missions is pending. ULA's reduced launch cadence, with only three launches last year, contrasts sharply with SpaceX’s nearly 100 launches, primarily for its Starlink satellites.

Additionally, ULA is under pressure to increase its launch frequency to meet commitments for 38 launches of Amazon’s Kuiper satellites and 25 national security missions by the end of 2027. The Pentagon relies on ULA to maintain a competitive and efficient launch service, as affirmed by statements from both Lockheed and Boeing on addressing the Pentagon's urgency.

The development of Vulcan has been further complicated by delays in the delivery of Blue Origin's BE-4 engines, which are crucial for the rocket. The Pentagon has highlighted the strategic need to enhance launch capabilities rapidly, given increasing space activities and potential conflicts in space, particularly concerning China's growing capabilities.