

Geomagnetic Storm Knocks Satellites Out of Sky... That's the ...

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Now this odd story – *very odd*, in my opinion – was sent by F.L.M., and I have to admit, that when I read it, initially I was rather cool to it. It seemed straightforward enough:

[Fiery demise of Elon Musk's Starlink satellites captured on video after space storm knocks them out of orbit](#)

[Elon Musk's SpaceX loses 40 satellites to geomagnetic storm](#)

And just to drill that “straightforward” aspect home a bit more, there's this from the article (the second link above):

A geomagnetic storm had disastrous consequences for [SpaceX](#)'s latest effort to launch “Starlink” satellites into orbit.

Elon Musk's firm said it expects as many as 40 of the 49 brand-new Starlink satellites deployed in a launch last Thursday were destroyed. The cosmic storm struck just one day after a Falcon 9 rocket successfully launched the costly satellites into orbit.

“These storms cause the atmosphere to warm and atmospheric density at our low deployment altitudes to increase,” SpaceX officials [said in an update](#) posted on the firm's website. “In fact, onboard GPS suggests the escalation speed and severity

of the storm caused atmospheric drag to increase up to 50 percent higher than during previous launches.”

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SpaceX said the satellites “pose zero collision risk with other satellites and by design demise upon atmospheric reentry—meaning no orbital debris is created and no satellite parts hit the ground.”

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The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s Space Weather Prediction Center had warned that geomagnetic storm conditions were “likely” on Feb. 2 and 3 following a solar flare. SpaceX’s update did not reference the warning.

Now, I’ll grant you, that most of me remains willing to take this story at all of its geomagnetic-there-was-a-solar-flare-that-altered-upper-atmospheric-drag-conditions-causing-the-launch-to-fail-and-the-satellite-orbits-to-change-and-they-all-burned-up-in-the-atmosphere self-explanatory glory.

But I’ll also admit there’s a small part of me that isn’t entirely buying, and that some of this “explanation” seems... well... *contrived*. Problem one (1): apparently this geomagnetic storm, or solar flare, or whatever it was, was so localized it affected only Mr. Musk’s satellites. So far, I’ve not heard any reports of anyone else’s satellites being effected. Problem two (2): this implies that the geomagnetic storm, or solar flare, or whatever it was, was rather *targeted*. We’ll get back to that.

Problem three (3): apparently the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration had issued a warning about the possibility of geomagnetic storms. Now this implies three “sub-problems”: (3a) either SpaceX didn’t know about the warning at all, or (3b) it did know but simply ignored it or

(3c) is did know, but determined that there was not much of a threat from the storm/solar flare and went ahead with the launch anyway.

Now (3c) is intriguing, because as noted above, no one else's satellites – as far as we know – were effected in any drastic way, just Mr. Musk's. That suggests an intriguing scenario to me, for it suggests that the "geomagnetic storm" wasn't sufficient in and of itself to cause the demise of the satellites and the failure of the launch. It suggests another mechanism was present, perhaps a mechanism *adding localized strength to the geomagnetic storm*, and hence, *hiding behind it*. What might it be? I suggest – if this wild and woolly high octane speculation is to make any sense at all – that the clue is found in the article itself: ***"These storms cause the atmosphere to warm and atmospheric density at our low deployment altitudes to increase,"*** SpaceX officials [said in an update](#) posted on the firm's website. ***"In fact, onboard GPS suggests the escalation speed and severity of the storm caused atmospheric drag to increase up to 50 percent higher than during previous launches."*** There is of course a human technology that is *designed* to manipulate upper atmospheric density, and that is of course the ionospheric heater. Indeed, I suspect that they are capable of manipulating solar flares themselves through the manipulation of those atmospheric effects, but that's another speculation for another day.

Now of course, the implication of this speculation is clear: someone does not want Mr. Musk to succeed, and that someone has access to some sophisticated technology and is willing to use it. And that could be just about anyone, from another private competitor, to a nation-state or non-state actor with much invested in space...

See you on the flip side...

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