

Putin Pledges Russian Mars Mission in 2019, Ahead of Musk and Trump

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Baikonur Cosmodrome **Shamil Zhumatov / Reuters**

Russia will launch a mission to Mars next year, President Vladimir Putin promised in a documentary published on the eve of presidential elections that he is widely expected to win.

Putin's promise comes days after California-based entrepreneur Elon Musk [announced](#) plans for his private company to launch a rocket to Mars as early as in 2019. Last month, Russian social media users reacted with a mixture of self-irony and pessimism over the country's space prospects after Musk's company, SpaceX, successfully launched a Tesla car into Mars' orbit.

Related article: [Russia's Answer to Elon Musk's SpaceX Falcon Heavy Launch in Memes](#)

"Very soon, in 2019, we're going to launch a mission toward Mars," Putin said in a new documentary film that was [posted](#) on Russian social media Thursday.

Speaking with his re-election campaign spokesman Andrei Kondrashov in the documentary, the president said Russia would also send a mission to the Moon.

“Our experts will try to land on the poles because there is reason to believe there may be water [...] Research of other planets and outer space could begin from there,” Putin said.

Last December, U.S. President Donald Trump [signed](#) an order that directed his country’s space program to send astronauts to the moon and “eventually Mars.”

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