



## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

# Japanese Space Company Says Moon Lander Likely Crashed

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A Japanese space exploration company said Wednesday there was “a high probability” that its vehicle crashed while trying to land on the moon.

The vehicle from ispace launched on a SpaceX rocket from Florida in December. It sent images of Earth back to Tokyo throughout its trip. The vehicle entered the moon’s orbit on March 21.

If the project had succeeded, ispace would have been the first private business to make a moon landing. Space agencies of the United States, former Soviet Union and China have succeeded in such efforts.

The ispace lander was carrying a rover, a vehicle to explore the moon’s surface, provided by the United Arab Emirates. A small robot was also on the flight.

Ispace officials told reporters later on Wednesday that its lander may have run out of fuel and crashed. The last communication showed the vehicle low on fuel and the lander increasing in speed.

Chief technology officer Ryo Ujiie called it a “free fall.”

Takeshi Hakamada started ispace in 2010. Hakamada said another moon-landing attempt is planned for next year. The goal of ispace is to become a transport service to the moon for equipment and other goods. The company has raised \$300 million to cover its first three missions.

“We will keep going, never quit the **lunar quest**,” Hakamada said.

A Japanese government spokesman, Hirokazu Matsuno, said it was sad news but the nation wants ispace to “keep trying.”

One member of the U.S. space program offered kind words for ispace on Twitter.

“If space is hard, landing is harder,” Laurie Leshin wrote. She is the director of NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory. “I know from personal experience how **awful** this feels.”

Leshin worked on the Mars polar lander that crashed in 1999.

It is the second crash or explosion for private space exploration companies in the last week. SpaceX’s Starship rocket exploded a few minutes after the launch of a test flight on April 20.

Many countries and private businesses are trying once again to reach the moon. NASA’s Artemis program made it to the moon and back in 2022. Two American companies have finished moon landers and are hoping to launch later this year. China has landed three spacecraft on the moon since 2013 and the U.S., China, India and South Korea have satellites in place.

I’m Dan Friedell.

*Dan Friedell adapted this story for Learning English based on reports by the Associated Press and Reuters.*

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## Words in This Story

**quest** *-n.* an important journey or project

**lunar** *-adj.* having to do with the moon

**awful** *-adj.* something bad or unpleasant

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