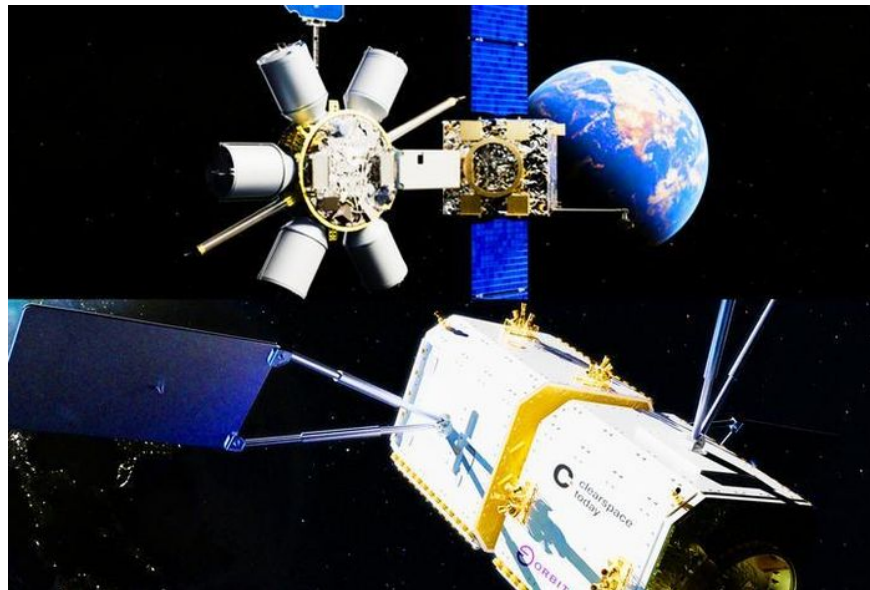


The US is researching special spacecraft to refuel satellites

The Southwest Research Institute (SwRI), in Texas, USA is researching the development of spacecraft to provide refueling services in space.

Originally, there are thousands of satellites that have been orbiting our blue planet. However, they face an important problem, which is running out of fuel over time. If left unchecked, this often causes the satellite to stop working, even if the satellite's engine is still working well.



Therefore, to solve this problem, there is a need for satellite refueling technology in space orbit to extend the operating time of satellites. Recently, an initiative of the Southwest Research Institute (SwRI) was born, aiming to build a specialized spacecraft to provide refueling services for satellites in space.

This innovative solution is also part of the \$25.5 million Space Mobility and Logistics (SML) Prototype Project, funded by the US Space Force and led by prime contractor Astroscale US.

Scientists at SwRI will develop the Astroscale prototype refueling spacecraft (APS-R), intended to refuel compatible vehicles in space orbit. According to the press release, APS-R will follow a circular path consistent with the Earth's rotation period. It will transport hydrazine propellant from storage to satellites that need refueling. This spacecraft will be able to provide services to any spacecraft or satellite, as long as they are equipped with a compatible refueling port.

Looking ahead, SwRI has set a goal of building the Astroscale prototype refueling spacecraft (APS-R) in the next 16 months, and the vehicle could be ready for launch in 2026.

Steve Thompson, systems engineer for the SwRI project, said: '*Running out of fuel is a common problem for spacecraft or satellites in Earth orbit. Once they have used up all their fuel, their mission is over - even though they may be at their best . " A refueling vehicle like the APS-R could help extend those missions, and we could extend the life of spacecraft already in Earth orbit, "* Thompson added .

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