



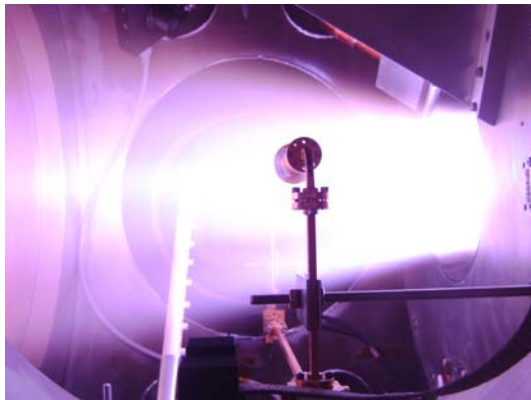
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**Ad Astra Rocket Company completes last plasma tests at NASA facility, prepares for transition to larger Houston laboratory.**

Houston, TX. USA. Ad Astra Rocket Company completed yesterday the last plasma test at its Houston laboratory located within the Sonny Carter Training Facility of the NASA Johnson Space Center. The historic milestone signals the transition to a much larger and more advanced test facility being readied a few miles southwest of the present site. Preliminary performance data from yesterday's tests continue to validate predicted values.



VASIMR™ exhaust plasma

The new facility, featuring a new 120m<sup>3</sup> vacuum chamber, which arrived last Friday from its manufacturer, PHPK Technologies of Columbus, Ohio, will enable much higher operational power and allow the full-scale testing of the 200kW VX-200 VASIMR™ plasma rocket prototype, the last step before a flight engine is built and tested in space. The new laboratory is expected to be operational in December of this year.

Transition to the new installation will take place over a number of weeks starting today.



New Ad Astra Vacuum Test Chamber

A small ceremony attended by Company and NASA officials, advisors and special guests was held immediately after the last two firings, which were respectively commanded by former Gemini, Apollo and Shuttle astronaut, John W. Young and Mr. George W. S. Abbey, former Director of the Johnson Space Center and a member of Ad Astra's board of directors.



Chamber installation, new Houston Facility

"This is an historic milestone for us, after 12 years at NASA, it marks the end of an exciting era and the beginning of a new but equally exciting one for our project" said Franklin R. Chang Díaz, Ad Astra's Chairman and CEO. "It is only fitting that this milestone occur on the week when the world celebrates the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of Sputnik-1, an event that inspired many of us to the space program" said Ad Astra's board member and director of research, Dr. Jared P. Squire, who traces his involvement with the VASIMR™ project to the earliest days of the NASA facility.

exhaust gases, the higher their velocity and hence the higher their fuel efficiency. Plasma rockets feature exhaust velocities far above those achievable by their chemical cousins; so their fuel consumption is extremely low and their fuel-related costs substantially reduced.

## **THE COMPANY**

Ad Astra Rocket Company is a privately-owned Delaware corporation, established January 14, 2005 to commercialize the technology of the VASIMR™ engine, a plasma propulsion system originally developed by NASA with potential to support an emerging in-space transportation market. The company has its main laboratory and corporate headquarters at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas, USA. Ad Astra also owns and operates Ad Astra Rocket Company, Costa Rica, a supporting research and development subsidiary in Guanacaste, Costa Rica.

## **COMPANY HISTORY**

Ad Astra was founded by former NASA astronaut and rocket scientist, Franklin R. Chang Díaz. Ad Astra has, through a privatization agreement with NASA, an exclusive license to the original VASIMR™ patents. However, in the last year, Ad Astra has added major improvements to these patents in the form of new company-owned intellectual property.

## **THE TECHNOLOGY**

Plasmas are electrically- charged fluids that can be heated to extreme temperatures by radio waves and controlled and guided by a strong magnetic field. The magnetic field also insulates the hot gas from any nearby structure; hence, temperatures well beyond the melting point of materials can be achieved and the resulting plasma can be harnessed to produce propulsion. In rocket propulsion, the higher the temperature of the