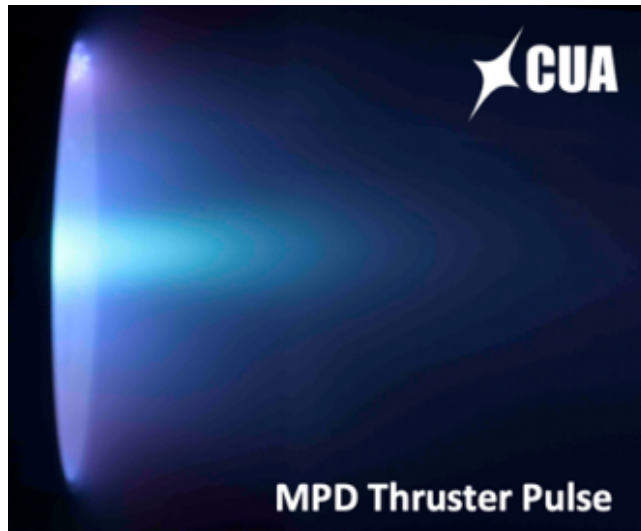




## **CU Aerospace LLC Awarded Multi-Million Dollar Contract for VLEO Air-Breathing MPD Thruster Development**



**CHAMPAIGN, Ill. - May 6, 2026 - [PRLog](#)** -- CU Aerospace, LLC, a leading aerospace engineering company for small satellite propulsion, is proud to announce their selection as the award recipient of a \$3.8 million dollar Phase 2 contract by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for the development of an innovative air-breathing pulsed magnetoplasmadynamic (MPD) thruster for use in very low Earth orbit (VLEO) missions with altitudes in the atmosphere below 400 km. This Phase 2 contract award for the project more commonly known as the DARPA Otter Program, involves the continued development and production of flight hardware and mission support. This project will establish flight heritage for the first VLEO thruster that utilizes ambient air as its limitless propellant, built upon CUA patented technology.

This groundbreaking project represents a significant leap forward in spacecraft propulsion technology. The cutting-edge pulsed MPD thruster enables a new class of low orbital altitude satellites by offering an airbreathing option with increased efficiency, lifetime, and versatility. Higher power versions of the MPD technology may also help to revolutionize deep space exploration.

"We are honored to have been selected by DARPA for this revolutionary spacecraft program and look forward to working with the Otter spacecraft provider." said Dr. David Carroll, President of CUA. "This contract represents a testament to our team's expertise and dedication to pushing the boundaries of space technology. We are excited to collaborate with DARPA in developing this state-of-the-art propulsion system that will shape the future of low altitude satellite operations."

The air-breathing pulsed MPD thruster uses high current generated by solar power to accelerate atmospheric air, offering enhanced performance, lifetime, and efficiency for VLEO spacecraft. The MPD technology combines low propellant consumption and high exhaust velocity with high overall thruster efficiency to enable VLEO missions.

Since its founding in 1998, CU Aerospace, LLC is known for its commitment to innovation and excellence in a variety of specialized areas of aerospace engineering. With a team of talented engineers and researchers, the company continues to push the boundaries of space technology, contributing to advancements shaping the future of the space ecosystem.

For more information about CU Aerospace and its aerospace technologies, please visit [www.cuaerospace.com](http://www.cuaerospace.com) or write to [info@cuaerospace.com](mailto:info@cuaerospace.com).

Distribution Statement A. Approved for public release: distribution unlimited.

### Contact

CU Aerospace, Sales Department

[\\*\\*\\*@cuaerospace.com](mailto:***@cuaerospace.com)

--- End ---

Source	CU Aerospace, LLC
City/Town	Champaign
State/Province	Illinois
Country	United States
Industry	<a href="#">Defense</a> , <a href="#">Telecom</a> , <a href="#">Aerospace</a>
Tags	<a href="#">VLEO propulsion</a> , <a href="#">Magnetoplasmadynamic Thruster</a> , <a href="#">CU Aerospace</a> , <a href="#">Otter Project</a> , <a href="#">Mpd</a> , <a href="#">Air-breathing Propulsion</a> , <a href="#">Electric Propulsion</a> , <a href="#">Very Low Earth Orbit</a>
Link	<a href="https://prlog.org/13143855">https://prlog.org/13143855</a>



Scan this QR Code with your SmartPhone to-

- \* Read this news online
- \* Contact author
- \* Bookmark or share online