On Thursday 21st September 10 members of Cambridge University Spaceflight arrived in Black Rock Desert to prepare for the launch of our latest rocket, Martlet 3. We were attending BALLS 26, an annual international rocketry festival. The team had been working hard on this project for 2 years so everyone was incredibly excited to see the rocket launch and the project come to an end.

There were a tremendous amount of logistics involved in getting 10 people, a rocket, and a bunch of ground support equipment from the Engineering Department all the way out to the middle of the desert, however we managed to pull it off and were able to launch on the afternoon of Saturday 23rd September.

Martlet 3 weighed in at 35kg with a height of 4.02m. The rocket launched and looked promising at first, however 3 seconds into the burn the engine exploded resulting in the failure of the lower half of the airframe which turned into carbon fibre shrapnel and rained down on the desert floor.

Interestingly, the screws holding the top half of the rocket on were all sheared cleanly during the explosion allowing the top half to continue upwards, albeit rather unstably, to reach a maximum altitude of 4.57km.

Although this was much lower than we had hoped for, the top section still managed to deploy its parachutes as planned and was found safe a few km from the launch rail.

I would like to thank the college very much for my travel grant. This trip was an amazing experience and allowed me to develop so many practical skills that will be invaluable as an engineer in the real world.