

Russia leads 2006 space launches

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The Russian Federal Space Agency said the country was the 2006 leader in space launches, accounting for 45 percent of craft sent into space this year.

Anatoly Perminov, head of the agency, said the country launched 24 spacecraft this year and plans a final space shot Wednesday, RIA Novosti reported Tuesday.

"Russia's current share in the spacecraft launch market is about 40 percent, and counting joint Russian-Ukrainian launches from the Sea Launch platform it totals about 45 percent of all launches conducted in the world," Perminov said.

He said about 20 launches are expected in 2007, with about \$912.3 million being allotted to the space program by the Russian government.

Perminov said the United States had the second highest launch total in 2006 with 18, and Japan and China were third with six launches apiece.

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