

Russia blames scientists for rocket crashes

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A Russian Progress-M-12M cargo ship carrying supplies for the International Space Station (ISS) blasts off from the launch pad at the Baikonour cosmodrome in August 2011. Russia's chief prosecutor on Tuesday blamed a recent spate of disasters threatening the future of the International Space Station (ISS) on negligence by the country's underpaid rocket scientists.

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A probe into the August 24 crash of the unmanned Progress cargo ship and an August 18 error that put Russia's biggest satellite in the wrong orbit blamed both mishaps on the state-run Roskosmos space agency and its workers.

The decision said the Prosecutor General's office would be pressing for

disciplinary measures and fines against "those who caused the accidents" and singled out the agency's executive for separate blame.

The prosecutor's statement pointed to "a lack of proper control on the part of Roskosmos officials over the adoption of corresponding decisions."

The once-vaunted [Russian space agency](#) was already rocked by a reshuffle in April when its chief Anatoly Perminov got the sack during celebrations for the 50th anniversary year of Yuri Gagarin's first [manned space flight](#).

Roskosmos has acknowledged the criticism but complains of being underfunded and unable to compete for top talent with Western firms that draw the young away from its Soviet-era institutions with spartan conditions.

Perminov's dismissal followed Russia's loss of three navigation satellites that the prime minister and likely future president [Vladimir Putin](#) has promoted as a rival to the US-made [Global Positioning System](#) (GPS).

Roskosmos has since been forced to temporarily ground its main rockets -- the longer-range Soyuz and the lucrative Proton-M -- and left question marks hanging over Russia's ability to safely deliver humans to space.

The US space agency NASA had been mulling the option of leaving the space station abandoned for the first time in 10 years should Roskosmos fail to solve problems with its Soyuz carrier rocket by mid-November.

The abandoned US space shuttle programme and the failure of both private and Western state firms to step in thus far has left Russia as the only nation capable of ferrying ISS replacement crews.

Roskosmos on October 3 successfully test-launched a Soyuz model and has since scheduled the next crew to the ISS for November 14.

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