

Russia seeks answers on ISS cargo ship crash

December 2 2016

Russian investigators on Friday were probing the crash shortly after launch of an unmanned spaceship taking cargo to the International Space Station, focusing on the Soyuz carrier rocket.

Russia's space agency said the Progress ship—carrying tons of food and equipment as well as gifts for the ISS crew of six—was lost minutes after launch Thursday evening in "an abnormal situation."

The Russian agency said a state commission would probe the failure but did not say whether the timing of future launches would be affected.

It said the spaceship burned up in the atmosphere above the remote Tuva region of Siberia. The region's emergency ministry said Friday that no debris had been found.

Reports on Friday pointed to a possible problem with the Soyuz carrier rocket—used in both manned and unmanned launches—which has been blamed for two previous failed Progress launches.

The Kommersant daily cited a source close to the Roscosmos space agency as saying the investigation would focus on the engine of the third-stage rocket, which is the last to fall away after launch.

If the glitch was caused by negligence, the makers could face disciplinary action, the source said.

TASS state [news agency](#) cited space industry sources as saying the

combustion chambers in the engine may have burnt out, possibly due to defective assembly.

The investigation could delay the launch of the next Progress cargo ship, set for February 2, it reported.

If the engine is found to be faulty, all those currently installed in Soyuz rockets will have to be retested, delaying future launches, another source told RIA Novosti news agency.

In April 2015, a failed Progress [launch](#) was also blamed on a problem with the Soyuz rocket, a space workhorse dating back to the Cold War era.

Because the same type of [rocket](#) is used for manned ships, Russia put all [space](#) travel on hold for nearly three months, and a group of astronauts had to spend an extra month on the ISS.

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