

Russia denies suspecting US astronauts of drilling hole on space station

September 12 2018

Russia on Wednesday reacted angrily to a report that it suspects US astronauts of deliberately drilling a hole on the International Space Station, one of the few remaining areas of cooperation between the countries.

The hole was detected on the ISS last month and quickly sealed up, but Russia has suggested that it was drilled deliberately.

Russian daily Kommersant reported Wednesday that a Russian space agency investigation is probing the possibility US [astronauts](#) deliberately drilled the hole in order to get a sick colleague sent back home.

Kommersant reported that this scenario was being looked into "as a priority," quoting a source participating in the investigation.

But deputy prime minister Yury Borisov rejected Kommersant's report, saying that "it is absolutely unacceptable to cast a shadow either on our cosmonauts or on American astronauts," RIA Novosti state news agency reported.

The deputy prime minister said it was "shortsighted and dangerous" to speculate until the findings of the investigation were released.

He also stressed the ISS was "a unified group where there are no political disagreements."

Russian space agency Roscosmos told AFP it would make no official comment until the findings are released, which is expected to happen this month.

Astronauts located the hole on August 30 in a Russian-made spacecraft docked to the ISS after an air leak was detected onboard, and closed it up with sealant.

Space agency chief Dmitry Rogozin told journalists last week that the hole could have been a deliberate act of sabotage and suggested this could have happened in space as well as back on Earth.

On Wednesday Rogozin wrote on Facebook that "spreading speculation and rumours about the incident on the ISS doesn't help the experts at Roscosmos and is aimed at undermining relations between comrades in the [space station](#) crew."

He told journalists Tuesday that initial findings showed "the situation is much more complicated than it seemed before."

The ISS crews are ferried to and from the [space](#) station in Russian Soyuz spacecraft. The hole was drilled in a section of a Soyuz that will not be used for the return journey to Earth.

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Citation: Russia denies suspecting US astronauts of drilling hole on space station (2018, September 12) retrieved 16 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-09-russia-denies-astronauts-drilling-hole.html>

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