



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Russia Rejects US Criticism of Missile Test that Destroyed Satellite

November 16, 2021

Russia has denied that a missile test that destroyed an orbiting satellite endangered the crew on the International Space Station (ISS).

U.S. officials said Monday the missile hit an old Russian satellite, which burst into more than a thousand pieces. They said this **debris** – thrown into orbit at about 28,000 kilometers per hour – could cause major damage to the ISS.

The American space agency NASA said all seven members of the ISS crew were directed to seek safety in their spaceship **capsules** for two hours. The crew includes four American astronauts, a German astronaut and two Russian cosmonauts.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the satellite strike “**reckless** and irresponsible behavior.” NASA Administrator Bill Nelson told The Associated Press the action had put ISS astronauts at four times greater risk than usual.

Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed Tuesday it carried out a missile test and destroyed a non-operational satellite that had been in orbit since 1982. But the ministry added that the strike was planned and carried out carefully. It said any resulting debris “did not and will not **pose** a threat to orbital stations, spacecraft and space activities.”

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg agreed with U.S. officials that the Russian strike had put the space station at risk. He told reporters in Brussels the action was also concerning “because it demonstrates that Russia is now developing new weapons systems that can shoot down the satellites.”

Experts say such tests create clouds of small debris pieces that can crash into other objects, sometimes leading to a **chain reaction** of dangerous flying objects through Earth's orbit.

NASA said the increased threat could delay some science research and other planned ISS activities. Four of the seven crew members just arrived at the station Thursday night.

A similar weapons test by China in 2007 also resulted in a large amount of debris. One of those pieces threatened to come dangerously close to the ISS last week, but was later ruled out as a risk.

The U.S. carried out missile tests on similar satellites in 2008, as did India in 2019. But those tests took place well below the ISS, which orbits around 420 kilometers above Earth.

I'm Bryan Lynn.

Reuters and The Associated Press reported on this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the reports for VOA Learning English. Katy Weaver was the editor.

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Words in This Story

debris – *n.* broken or torn pieces that come from something larger

capsule – *n.* the part of a spacecraft that people live in

reckless – *adj.* showing a lack of care about risks or danger

pose – *v.* to cause a problem

chain reaction – *n.* a series of events in which each one causes the next one to happen