The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Proton-M Launched After String of Failures

September 21, 2011

A Proton-M rocket carrying a military satellite was successfully launched from Kazakhstan's Baikonur Cosmodrome early Wednesday, an army spokesman said, Interfax reported.

It was the first launch of the Proton-M — Russia's main rocket for carrying satellites — since Aug. 18, when a malfunction in the rocket's booster stage sent a $265 million communications satellite into the wrong orbit.

Last month's botched launch was one of a series of spacecraft-related incidents over the past nine months that have raised concerns about Russia's space industry.

Three Glonass-M navigation satellites launched from the Kazakh-based Baikonur Cosmodrome plummeted into the Pacific in December due to a programming error. Military satellite Geo-IK2, which blasted off from the Plesetsk pad in February, ended up in the wrong orbit after a booster failed.

On Aug. 24, the upper-stage motor on an unmanned Progress M-12M supply ship bound for

the International Space Station malfunctioned, sending the spacecraft crashing back to Earth. Pieces of its debris were recovered weeks later in the Altai Mountains in Central Asia.

That accident sent jitters through the space community because the Soyuz rocket that ferries astronauts to the station uses a similar upper-stage motor.

Since NASA retired its space shuttle in July, Soyuz ships have been the sole means for crew members to reach — and leave — the station. The American space agency earmarked $1.6 billion to develop space taxis as alternative to the Russian rockets.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/09/21/proton-m-launched-after-string-of-failures-a9675