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Punishment for Space Losses

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President Dmitry Medvedev raised the prospect of criminal prosecution for space mishaps on Saturday following a series of failed launches that have embarrassed Russia.

Earlier this month, a probe designed to bring back soil samples from the Martian moon Phobos got stuck in Earth's orbit, leaving Russia's first interplanetary mission in years with almost no chance of success.

The probe failure came less than three months after a cargo ship carrying food and fuel to the International Space Station burned up in the atmosphere shortly after launch.

"Recent failures are a strong blow to our competitiveness. It does not mean that something fatal has happened, it means that we need to carry out a detailed review and punish those guilty," Medvedev told reporters in televised comments.

"I am not suggesting putting them up against the wall like under Josef Vissarionovich [Stalin], but seriously punish either financially or, if the fault is obvious, it could be a disciplinary or even criminal punishment," he said.

(Reuters)

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