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Fighting Asteroids a New Task for Russia's Space Industry

By The Moscow Times

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The Federal Space Agency has a new mission on its plate: fighting asteroids, the organization's head said Sunday.

Agency chief Oleg Ostapenko said meetings had been arranged with the Russian Academy of Sciences to discuss the project and later confer with scientists. "It is an interesting topic," he said.

Detecting and combating threatening space rocks is a complex task, Ostapenko added, which may also require teamwork with Russia's Space Forces. The issue "can be solved only within the framework of all our country's possibilities," he said.

The announcement follows last week's discovery of a 410-meter-wide asteroid that could hit Earth in 2032, which Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin called "a super-task for our space industry."

Scientists' initial estimates said the asteroid has a 1 in 63,000 chance of colliding with Earth on August 26, 2032, though they said astronomers will be able to better evaluate the impact risk in 2028.

The asteroid has been given a 1 out of 10 rating on the Torino Scale, which estimates asteroid impact hazards.

Another space intruder made headlines earlier this year when a meteor exploded over Russia's Urals city of Chelyabinsk in February, shattering windows and shocking residents.

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