The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Produces 'More Space Debris Than Any Other Country'

November 29, 2013



The position of every known piece of space debris orbiting Earth. **Michael Najjar**

Russia has fewer satellites in space than the U.S. or China, but it is the undisputed leader in terms of the amount of debris it has left floating about the Earth's orbit, according to figures released Friday.

The U.S. accounts for one-third of the world's spacecraft, with 371 U.S. satellites orbiting the Earth, followed by China with 113 satellites, and Russia with 111, a report by the Central Research Institute for Engineering said, Interfax reported.

The three top satellite operators also lead the world in terms of the amount of space debris they produce. Russia is the worst offender with 6,125 pieces of space trash in orbit, followed by the U.S. with 4,627, and China with 3,672.

By Oct. 31, the total number of objects in the Earth's orbit had reached 16,886, including 1,153 spacecraft and 15,733 inactive "space objects."

Some 80 percent of all space debris is concentrated in low Earth orbit, causing concern to grow among research scientists and space officials in recent years.

Russia has also been blamed for environmental damage caused by one of its Proton-M rockets exploding near the Baikonur Cosmodrome this summer. Kazakhstan has asked Russia to pay $89.5 million in compensation for the damage inflicted by poisonous chemicals released in the explosion.

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