The Moscow Times
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Minister Wants Russia to Build All Satellites on Russian Soil

By The Moscow Times

July 24, 2014



Some Russian satellite manufacturers are already pursuing designs that are free of foreign components after the U.S. State Department in April announced it would restrict satellite parts exports.

The Communications and Mass Media Minister on Thursday said Russia should produce all of its communications satellites on home soil as Western sanctions threaten to deprive Russia's satellite manufacturers of high-tech components.

"The first and primary thesis is that we order only Russian satellites," Minister Nikolai Nikiforov said at a recent Cabinet meeting, according to a statement published Thursday on the website of the ministry, which is Russia's biggest buyer of satellite systems.

Spacecraft should be built by Russian engineers working for Russian companies, and launched by Russian rockets, Nikiforov said.

Given Washington's decision to place restrictions on high-tech dual use technologies —

which include many important satellite components, such as radiation shielded parts — it is obvious that the ministry cannot guarantee the development of Russia's civil satellite constellation if it remains dependent on foreign partners, Nikiforov said.

Russia's dependence on foreign manufacturers is very high as imported components make up 80 to 90 percent of Russian payloads and 30 to 40 percent in spacecraft platforms, he said.

One of the goals of the Russian government should be to expand Russia's presence in the global space industry, the minister added. Russian launch vehicles dominate the launch market, but the country's largest satellite manufacturer — the Russian Satellite Communications Company — is only ninth in the world in terms of revenue.

Nikiforov said Russian satellite firms have a market share of just 3 percent.

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Nikolai Testoyedov, head of satellite builder Information Satellite Systems, said that his company could build satellites that are free of U.S. export restrictions, but only by developing domestic technologies and relying on Chinese components.

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