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After Chelyabinsk, Russia Wants the Ability to Kill Asteroids

By The Moscow Times

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Russia wants the ability to destroy Earth-killing asteroids, and the Federal Space Agency says it only needs 23 billion rubles ($634 million) to do it, according to a proposed national space agenda through 2025 obtained by Interfax on Wednesday.

Russia has been leading the global charge in asteroid defense following the explosion of a meteor over the city of Chelyabinsk in 2013. That explosion generated a force estimated to be 20 to 30 times greater than the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. The rock blew up 30 kilometers over the city, and though no one died, 1,500 people were injured. The incident served as a wake up call to the real dangers of asteroid impacts.

Now, Russia is looking to build an asteroid defense system.

The proposed Federal Space Program 2016-2025, which is being considered by the government, envisions the creation of a "means of ensuring the delivery and impact with objects approaching on a collision course with Earth in order to change their orbits to avoid

collision with the planet," Interfax cited the document as saying.

The 23 billion ruble ($634 million) proposal is not limited to asteroid defense, however. It also calls for the creation of orbital garbage trucks — spacecraft that would comb the trash-ridden void of low Earth orbit for fragments of old rockets, dead satellites, and other potentially harmful space junk.

Such a system would be supported by a network of tracking stations on the ground that would catalogue dangerous asteroids and space debris in order to ensure the security of outer space, and would be coordinated from Russia's mission control center on Korolyov, just outside of Moscow.

Roscosmos declined a request to comment on the proposal, which has yet to receive government approval.

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