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Roscosmos Plans to Beef Up Russia's Segment of the International Space Station

By The Moscow Times

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View from cosmonaut Oleg Artemyev's helmet during a recent Russian spacewalk outside of the International Space Station

Russia's space agency says it plans to continue expanding its segment of the International Space Station, or ISS, in 2017, amid concerns that Moscow will pull out of the program in 2020 due to fraying relations with its major partner in space, the U.S., over the crisis in Ukraine, Interfax reported Wednesday.

In May, Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin — who oversees the space industry — said Russia was not interested in accepting a NASA proposal to extend the life of the space station beyond its current 2020 end date. The Federal Space Agency, or Roscosmos, has yet to comment officially on these remarks, but Russia's ISS program manager said two weeks ago that the government had not yet given Roscosmos permission to accept the proposal

because of the situation in Ukraine, SpaceNews reported.

Regardless of the future of the station, a proposed federal space plan for 2016-2025 envisions an expansion of the existing Russian segment of ISS in 2017, Interfax reported, citing a copy of the document. That year, Russia would launch its long-delayed Multipurpose Laboratory Module, as well as a new hub module and docking module — allowing five ships to dock with the station.

The overall cost of Russia's ISS extension will be almost 4 billion rubles ($110 million).

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

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