

Russia to Stop Buying Ukrainian Space Rockets

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 02, 2015



Angara rocket being readied for launch.

Russia's new state-owned space corporation, Roscosmos, will stop buying Ukrainian-made rockets and use a newer Russian-made equivalent instead, spokesperson Igor Burenkov told the Izvestia daily on Monday.

The move ties in to Russian efforts to decouple its military-industrial complex from war-torn Ukraine, which inherited a cluster of valuable defense-related enterprises from the Soviet Union in 1991. These included the vast Yuzhmash Machine Building Plant, which builds the Zenit light rocket.

The Zenit is currently purchased by Russian company Energia for use in its U.S.-based joint venture, Sea Launch. But, Burenkov told Izvestia, "our industry has just finished creating a modern rocket [Angara] that allows us to perform any mission, and we decided there was no sense in buying rockets in Ukraine."

The decision to spurn Ukrainian Zenit rockets marks perhaps the first major change in Russian space policy since President Vladimir Putin green-lighted the creation of the Roscosmos corporation last month to reinvigorate Russia's space sector.

The former head of Russia's Federal Space Agency, Oleg Ostapenko, opposed dropping the Zenit rocket, which he said would be used through 2018. But the new management has cast doubt on Yuzhmash's ability to deliver, pointing to financial problems at the plant.

Such a change would have the added benefit of strengthening demand for the Angara and support employment in Russia's struggling space industry during a sharp economic downturn.

Satellites already scheduled for launches aboard Zenit rockets will be transferred to Angara rockets, Burenkov said.

It was not immediately clear from the Izvestia report what this decision will do to Sea Launch, which uses Zenit rockets to fire commercial payloads into orbit from a floating platform in the Pacific Ocean.

Sea Launch suspended operations last year due to concerns that the breakdown in trade relations between Russia and Ukraine would jeopardize the company's supply chain. Last month, Energia officials said that they would propose using the new Angara rockets for Sea Launch. But such a change would require a rework of the company's launch platform, which is designed for the Zenit rocket.

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