

Russia's Accident-Prone Proton Rocket to Get 'Even More Competitive'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

March 20, 2015



A Proton rocket, six of which have crashed on launch within the last four years, being prepared for a mission.

Despite a number of catastrophic setbacks in recent years, Russia's Proton rocket will be competitive on the global commercial satellite launch market for another 10 years before it is replaced with the new Angara design, the head of the company that builds both rockets said late last week.

"Proton remains competitive," Khrunichev Space Center chief Andrei Kalinovsky said in an interview with the TASS news agency published Friday.

"Its [Proton's] design is completely reliable," he said, adding that the company is working to increase production efficiency and labor productivity. "This will allow us to make the rocket even more competitive. I think it will successfully compete on the international market until 2025."

Over the past four years Russian Proton rockets have crashed on launch six times, causing some industry observers to question the health of Khrunichev's production lines.

Khrunichev sells commercial launches of the Proton rocket on the international market via the Virginia-based International Launch Services. Khrunichev not only builds the Proton rocket, but also the new Angara family of rockets.

Angara will eventually replace Proton on the launch market, Kalinovsky said. Proton has been flying since the 1960s and recently celebrated its 400th launch. Angara is Russia's first post-Soviet rocket, which flew for the first time last summer.

Angara's smallest variation is particularly suited to the growing trend in the commercial market for smaller satellites, making larger rockets like the Proton too big for some customers.

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