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Russia Demands South Korea Apologize For North Korea Rocket Delivery Claim

By The Moscow Times

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The Russian Foreign Ministry on Wednesday demanded an apology from South Korea for accusing Russia of supplying rocket technology to North Korea following the Hermit Kingdom's belligerent launch of a space rocket on Feb. 7.

Not long after the launch, which saw Pyongyang send a multi-stage rocket with a satellite into orbit, South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported the vehicle might have contained elements produced in Russia, citing a South Korean lawmaker.

On Wednesday, the head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's Department of Arms Control and Non-Proliferation, Mikhail Ulyanov, fired back at Seoul demanding an apology for making "irresponsible" and "unprofessional" accusations.

"If the South Koreans really have any reason to suspect us of illegal shipments, which violate UN Security Council resolutions, then the evidence must be presented," Ulyanov said, urging Seoul to back up such claims if proof cannot be presented.

Space rockets are technologically similar to intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) used to lob nuclear warheads across the planet — Yury Gagarin, in fact, rode a derivative of the Soviet Union's first ICBM into space in 1961.

The UN Security council has prohibited North Korea from conducting rocket research, but Pyongyang continues to experiment with the technology as part of what it claims to be a peaceful civilian space program, akin to those found in Russia, the United States, and the world over.

Russia is a signatory of an international arms control convention aimed at preventing nations like North Korea from developing ICBMs, known as the Missile Technology Control Regime. However, adherence to the regime is voluntary.

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