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'Critical Defect' Found in Russia's Mega Cosmodrome

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At least one "critical defect" has been discovered at the multibillion-ruble Vostochny Cosmodrome in Far East Russia that operators claim was fixed last month.

Scandals have rocked Russia's space industry in recent months, including mass embezzlement charges, the discovery of a small hole in a spacecraft attached to the International Space Station (ISS) and a rocket failure that aborted a manned mission to the ISS in October.

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A state firm in charge of ground operations at Russian rocket launch sites has detected a "critical defect" at Vostochny Cosmodrome, according to a contract posted on the government procurement website last week.

“The defect is critical,” reads one of the problem areas listed in the contract that describes expansion joints at the foundation components of one of the launch sites.

A Defense Ministry institute has been selected to fix the defects for 4.9 million rubles ($73,400).

Russia’s Center for Ground-based Space Infrastructure (TsENKI), the enterprise that posted the contract, told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency that the defects had been fixed on Oct. 25.

“At the moment there are no concerns about regular operations at the launch site,” an unnamed TsENKI spokesperson was quoted as saying.

The discovery follows the announcement of another 4.5-million-ruble contract in early September to remove cavities underneath one of the launch sites at Vostochny.

It also comes as prosecutors accuse former top officials at the Roscosmos state space agency of systematically violating the law.

“In general, there was no budget tracking in the industry’s enterprises,” Interfax quoted Alexander Kurennoy, a spokesman at the Prosecutor General’s Office, as saying Tuesday.

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