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Russian Space Chief Hits Back at Meme-Making Critics, Takes U.S. Snub in Stride

January 10, 2019



Dmitry Rogozin (Aubrey Gemignani / NASA)

The head of Russia's space administration wants critics to cut it out with their memes.

Mass corruption has plagued Russia's space industry as prosecutors have uncovered fraud cases in recent months and auditors have accused federal space agency Roscosmos of misplacing billions of dollars.

Blunders like the discovery of a tiny hole inside a spacecraft attached to the International Space Station (ISS) last summer and a rocket failure that caused a U.S.-Russian crew to abort its mission last fall have led to online derision.

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Roscosmos head Dmitry Rogozin trained his ire at such online naysayers in an interview with the RBC media outlet published Thursday, singling out specific memes including "forgive us, Yura!" — in reference to Yury Gagarin, the first man in space.

"Any of our failures and accidents spark a strong public outcry, sometimes an exaggerated reaction ... and sometimes deranged cries," Rogozin said.

Those critics, he said, should "act instead of telling laypeople how bad things are."

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Rogozin — who has been under U.S. sanctions since Russia annexed Crimea in 2014 — took NASA's recent decision to withdraw an invitation to the United States in stride, however.

"I'm ready to accept the head of the agency Jim Bridenstine in Russia," Rogozin was quoted by RBC as saying.

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