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Russia Calls for Joint Space Safety Efforts After Space Missile Test Threatens ISS

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Roscosmos cosmonauts Anton Shkaplerov (foreground) and Pyotr Dubrov inside the International Space Station's Zvezda service module. **NASA**

Russia's space agency on Tuesday called for the world's space powers to work together after the United States denounced Russia's "dangerous and irresponsible" missile strike that blew up one of its own satellites and created a debris cloud.

The International Space Station's crew was forced to take shelter in their return ships from an unidentified satellite's wreckage Monday. U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken said Russia's alleged test of a direct-ascent anti-satellite missile generated over 1,500 pieces of orbital debris which would pose a continuous threat to the station.

Related article: U.S. Slams Russia for 'Irresponsible' Space Missile Test

Following the accusations, Russia's state space agency Roscosmos said Tuesday that the ISS crew's safety remained its "main priority."

"We're convinced that only joint efforts of all space powers will be able to ensure the safest possible coexistence and activity in outer space," Roscosmos said in a statement.

Russia has previously dismissed U.S. accusations of testing an anti-satellite weapon in outer space as "propaganda." Russia's military has not yet commented on the latest reported test.

If confirmed, the test of Russia's direct-ascent anti-satellite missile would be the fourth ever to hit a spacecraft from the ground.

Anti-satellite weapons (ASATs) are high-tech missiles possessed by few nations.

The target of the missile was Cosmos 1408, a 1982 Soviet signals intelligence satellite that has been defunct for several decades, according to space industry analysis company Seradata.

Roscosmos said earlier Tuesday that work continues as normal at the space station following the incident, adding that the ISS' orbital parameters "are in the so-called green zone."

"At the moment, the crew is performing work nominally per the flight program," the Kommersant business daily quoted Roscosmos as saying.

"The remaining issues are not within the competence of Roscosmos," it added.

NASA said the four Americans, two Russians and one German astronaut aboard the ISS were instructed to close the station's hatches and take shelter in their return ships for two hours in the event of a possible emergency evacuation.

The orbital station continues to pass near or through the cloud of debris every 90 minutes and will continue to threaten satellites, the U.S. warned saying it was discussing its response with partners.

AFP contributed reporting.

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