

Space Agency Might Become State Corporation

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Federal Space Agency might be transformed into a state corporation, Vladimir Popovkin, head of the agency, said Thursday.

"Under one possible scenario, we'll consider setting up a state corporation called Roskosmos similarly to Rosatom," he said. "We're preparing such proposals. Our country's prime minister and president have the final say."

Meanwhile, the head of one of the country's leading space firms has resigned from his post following a series of mishaps involving engines produced by his firm.

Vladimir Nesterov, 63, formerly head of the Khrunichev State Research and Production Space Center, submitted his resignation letter in connection with the failed launch of two satellites earlier this month, Interfax reported Wednesday, citing a government source.

The resignation of Nesterov, who headed the space company that produces space equipment including Proton rocket boosters, comes shortly after Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said that those responsible for the failures would be punished.

Medvedev, who made the comments at a government meeting on the space industry on Tuesday, said that 10 botched satellite launches had taken place over the past year and a half.

"Nothing of this kind happens anywhere in the world," Medvedev said.

The Khrunichev center was responsible for designing the Briz upper-stage engines that failed to lift two telecommunications satellites into orbit Aug. 6.

The Russian government is planning to invest 650 billion rubles (\$20.3 million) in the country's space industry by 2015. Space flight was identified as a key economic priority during Medvedev's presidency.

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