

Top Space Official Resigns Following Failed Launch

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A Proton rocket with an attached Briz upper stage at the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The company Nesterov headed produces the Briz engines, among other space equipment.

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 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 billion) in the country's space industry by 2015. Space flight was earlier identified as a key economic priority during Medvedev's presidency.

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