

Russia Can Compete with SpaceX, Kremlin Claims

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Elon Musk **Jae C. Hong / AP**

Elon Musk has the Kremlin's attention.

The Silicon Valley entrepreneur's SpaceX company made history on March 30 when it launched and landed a used rocket. No one has ever done that before. And the breakthrough has forced Russians to grapple with the decay and struggle of their own national space program. Musk has even been invited to the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum in June as a nominee for an award given by President Vladimir Putin Himself, the [Interfax news agency reported](#).

The SpaceX milestone was "an important achievement," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in Moscow on Friday. But he said it is important to remember that Russia is developing groundbreaking technologies, too.

"We have every reason to believe that we can compete" with SpaceX and other companies

in the global space industry, Peskov was quoted as saying by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency. He did not specify what exactly the government plans to do to compete.

Russia's state space corporation, Roscosmos, is being modernized right now, Peskov said. "The head of Roscomos, Igor Komarov, has reported to President Vladimir Putin that Russian specialists are working on cutting-edge technologies."

Independent space experts do not share Peskov's optimism, however.

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Russia, "homeland of [the first man in space Yuri] Gagarin," has fallen 20 years behind Musk, Vadim Lukashevich, a prominent space expert who was dismissed from the Skolkovo, a state-backed research center, [for criticizing Roscosmos' reform efforts](#) in 2015, wrote on Facebook Friday.

"Today, the Presidential Space Council will discuss the main areas of development of the Russian space industry up to 2030, and this program has nothing in it about reusing [rockets]," Lukashevich wrote. "I'm genuinely ashamed for Roscosmos."

The Russian space industry has been experiencing numerous quality issues lately. Earlier this week, an investigation into quality control issues discovered that nearly every engine currently stockpiled for use in Proton rockets is defective, RIA Novosti news agency reported, citing Igor Arbuzov, head of state rocket engine manufacturer Energomash.

71 engines, mostly used to power the second and third stages of the Proton rocket, require complete overhauls to remove defects. Arbuzov did not specify what was wrong with the engines. In January, Interfax reported on an investigation into high-quality metals swapped by a plant manager for cheaper alternatives.

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