

## **U.S.-Russian Cooperation in Space: Its Tensions With Nonproliferation**

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Conventional wisdom has it that the more we and our allies cooperate with Russia on civilian space projects and show them that they can profit from peaceful trade, the less they will be inclined or need to sell this sensitive technology to nations that would use it for military purposes. According to this view, the more U.S.-Russian civilian space cooperation and commerce one has, the more the cause of nonproliferation will be served. Unfortunately, things are not so simple.

In fact, two of Russia's most important incentives to proliferate have nothing at all to do with earning a profit. The first of these is the foreign political access and influence Russia gains when it sells militarily useful space technology to others. It isn't just the few hundreds of millions of dollars a year in sales in dangerous technologies that keeps Moscow cooperating with Iran and China; it's also the leverage it affords Russia with them on a host of other diplomatic, trade, and security issues. Second, for cultural and political reasons, Russia is anxious to maintain its outmoded military-related industries - including its oversized space and missile sector. Because this infrastructure is still too large ever to be either profitable or fully employed supplying legitimate demand, efforts to maintain it continue to drive Russia toward risky exports in the mistaken belief that cornering this illegitimate market might keep it from having to further downsize its space and missile sector.

These proliferation motivations are important: As long as they are in play, U.S.-Russian space cooperation and our efforts to curb dangerous missile proliferation will be at odds on at least three counts.

First, there is an immediate tension between U.S. funding work on the International Space Station (ISS) and our desire not to have U.S. taxpayers support Russian entities that are proliferating missile technology to Iran and others. The original idea behind U.S.-Russian cooperation on the space station - an idea I remember first raising as an option in talks with the Russians in 1992 -- was to get Moscow fully to comply with the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). This deal was subsequently struck under President Clinton. When it became clear that Russia was not living up to this deal's nonproliferation requirements, the Iran Nonproliferation Act of 2000 was finally enacted. Its aim

was assure that, at the very least, U.S. taxpayers would not pay to have Russian entities engage in such proliferation. Now, one of the issues is whether or not President Bush should invoke the act's safety waiver. Invoking the waiver would require stretching the law quite a bit. The act reads that one can only invoke the waiver "to prevent the imminent loss of life or grievous injury" to those aboard the station. So long as the station's current crew can be returned to earth -- and it can -- this condition is simply not present. Then, there are the politics of making such a waiver, which, at best, are awkward. Making the waiver certainly would set quite a precedent. What parts of the space station aren't important to safety? There aren't many. Yet, if you waive for one without meeting the law's clear language, why or where would you ever stop? More important, nobody really thinks our intelligence agencies can give Russia a clean bill of health on Iranian missile proliferation. This, in turn, raises a host of difficult questions. Is keeping the Space Station's schedule on track (even though we've already let it slip year after year) and on budget (even though we've already paid billions and billions over the project's original cost estimate) a priority that should now trump our security and that of millions of people who live down range from Iran's missiles? Is slowing the project down until Moscow can get a clean bill of health from our intelligence agencies or until we can develop an alternative to the Soyuz more than we can afford? The President certainly spoke up in support of the space station in Moscow. But he and Putin also warned the world about Tehran's worrisome development of strategic weapons and it was this announcement, not Bush's statement on the station, that got the world's attention.

Second, there is a tension between civilian U.S-Russian space commerce and cooperation and "peaceful" Russian space-related transfers that Moscow knows are being diverted for military uses in Iran, Pakistan, Libya, India, and China - nations either primed to proliferate or that already have a track record of doing so. President Bush only increased this tension with his announced desire to work with friendly states, including Russia, to interdict the export of weapons of mass destruction including illicit missiles and the means to make them. If Russia fails to cooperate fully in this effort, this failure will only work to expose U.S.-Russian space cooperation and commerce to increased political scrutiny and skepticism. Russia is helping to build missiles for India; India has just signed a military cooperation agreement with Iran and is talking about exporting its own missile technology. Iran, meanwhile, is not just getting covert missile assistance from Moscow. It is also overtly buying Russian satellites and earth tracking stations that could help it and others target their missiles against our friends and forces abroad. Moscow knows this but continues to claim that all of its space commerce is peaceful.

Finally, there is a tension between the lack of domestic military and civilian call for Russian space related goods and services and U.S.-Russian space transfers, which tend to keep Russia's space infrastructure larger than legitimate demand can support. U.S. and European cooperative space efforts and commerce with Russia are too modest to keep all of Russia's oversized space and missile

industry fully employed. But they are not small enough to force Russia to make the painful political decisions to further downsize their industry so it will not be so prone to proliferate. In the U.S., whatever surplus of space-related capabilities we have is maintained with the federal funding of space related projects. Russian government funding of its space industry, however, is much smaller. As such, there is constant pressure on many of its space enterprises to sell militarily useful technology to foreign customers who might use or sell this technology to proliferate. Until Russia's space industry is downsized to accord with legitimate private and domestic military demand, continued U.S. space cooperation and commerce with Moscow at current or higher levels is doomed to encourage at least as much Russian missile and space proliferation as it might prevent.