

Russian space chief questions NASA plans, praises partnership with China

Enlarge / China's Vice Premier Wang Yang (standing) and Russia's then-Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin at Russian-Chinese talks at Constantine Palace in 2016.

Alexander AstafyevTASS via Getty Images

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The chief of Russia's space corporation, Dmitry Rogozin, offered less-than-flattering comments about NASA's Moon program in a recent interview with a Russian tabloid newspaper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.

Asked about Russia's interest in sending humans to the Moon and possibly partnering with NASA, Rogozin dismissed the Artemis program. He responded: "Frankly speaking, we are not interested in participating in such a project."

The Russian space chief has publicly complained for some time that NASA has chosen a 2024 landing date for political reasons. He has also compared US efforts to build a sustainable program of exploration on the surface of the Moon to American invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

"It's more of a political project for the US now," Rogozin said of Artemis. "With the lunar project, we are seeing our US partners move away from the principles of cooperation and

mutual support that have developed with cooperation on the ISS. They see their program not as international but as similar to NATO.”

“Definitely our partner”

NASA has successfully worked with Russia for more than two decades on the International Space Program. Although NASA is clearly leading development of the Artemis lunar exploration program, it has begun to discuss deep partnerships with Japan, Canada, and several European countries to extend the space station partnership.

Russia’s space program does not currently have any concrete role in NASA’s plans to explore space beyond low Earth orbit. NASA is talking to Russia about building an airlock for the Lunar Gateway, a small space station in orbit around the Moon, but US officials suggest those talks are far from settled.

In the interview, Rogozin talked much more effusively about collaborating with China on future exploration projects. “We respect their results,” Rogozin said, adding that the Asian nation “is definitely our partner” moving forward.

“Today, relations between Russia and China are very good,” he said. “Both on the level of our presidents and on the level of political leadership in general.”

Rogozin said China has shared its exploration plans with Russia. However, China has not shared those plans in detail publicly. The country is expected to develop the super-heavy lift Long March 9 rocket later this decade, a booster that would provide the lift capacity needed to send Chinese taikonauts to the Moon in the 2030s.

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