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Russia Accused of Testing Anti-Satellite Weapon

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Why in News

Recently, the **USA and the UK have accused Russia** of test-firing a **space-based anti-satellite weapon**.

Key Points

- **USA's Claims:**

- The test consisted of **Russia's satellite called Cosmos 2543** injecting an object into orbit.
 - Cosmos 2543 operated in abnormally close proximity to a USA government satellite in **low-earth orbit** (LEO) before it manoeuvred away and over to another Russian satellite.
 - This **test is inconsistent with the intended purpose of the satellite** as an **inspector system**.
- It is evidence of Russia's continuing efforts to develop and test space-based systems to put USA's weapons and allied space assets at risk.
- The USA will discuss the issue during the talks for the **New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty** (START).
It is a treaty between the **USA and the Russian Federation** on measures for the further **reduction and limitation of strategic offensive arms**.
- The **USA Space Force** was created for the defence of its satellites in December 2019.

- **Russia's Clarifications:**

- The Russian defence ministry said that Cosmos-2543 is an **inspector satellite, meant to monitor the condition of Russian satellites.**

Cosmos-2543 was deployed by another satellite, Cosmos-2542, which was launched on **25th November 2019** by the Russian military.

- Russia held that it is **fully committed to obligations on the non-discriminatory use and study of space with peaceful aims.**
- It has asked the USA and the UK to be professional and refrain from propagandistic information attacks.

- **Anti-Satellite Capability:** Only **four countries** which are **Russia, the USA, China and India**, have demonstrated an **anti-satellite capability** over the past decades.

- In **March 2019**, India under the **Mission Shakti**, successfully tested the **Anti-Satellite System** (A-SAT) System making it the fourth country to acquire the capability of space warfare.
- A-SAT System is a **missile-based system to attack moving satellites** and successfully destroyed a live satellite in the LEO.
- **Defence Research and Development Organisation** (DRDO) has developed the system completely indigenously.

- **International Treaties Regarding Outer Space:**

- **UN Outer Space Treaty 1967:** It prohibits weapons of mass destruction in outer space and not the ordinary weapons. **India ratified** it in 1982.
- **UN Transparency and Confidence Building Measures (TCBMs):** It includes registering space objects with the UN register, pre-launch notifications etc. India shares these details with the UN.
- **Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC):** It is an international governmental forum for the worldwide coordination of activities related to the issues of man-made and natural debris in space.

India has supported the UN resolution on **No First Placement of Weapons in Outer Space.**

Source: TH