

DEBRIS FROM CHINESE ROCKET FALLS TO EARTH

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A Chinese booster rocket made an uncontrolled return to earth on Saturday, leading U.S. officials to chide Beijing for not sharing information about the potentially hazardous object's descent.

U.S. Space Command "can confirm the People's Republic of China (PRC) Long March 5B (CZ-5B) re-entered over the Indian Ocean at approx 10:45 a.m. MDT on 7/30," the U.S. military unit said on Twitter.

"We refer you to the #PRC for further details on the reentry's technical aspects such as potential debris dispersal+ impact location," the U.S. Space Command said.

In a statement posted to its official WeChat profile, the China Manned Space Agency later gave coordinates for an impact area in the Sulu Sea, about 57 km off the east coast of the Philippines' Palawan Island.

Launching space module

"Most of its devices were ablated and destroyed during re-entry," the agency said of the booster rocket, which was used last Sunday to launch the second of three modules China needed to complete its new Tiangong space station.

Malaysia's space agency said it detected rocket debris burning up on re-entry before falling in the Sulu Sea, northeast of the island of Borneo. "The burning debris also crossed Malaysian airspace and could be detected in several areas, including the airspace around the state of Sarawak," it said.

NASA administrator Bill Nelson criticised Beijing on Twitter, saying the failure to share details of the rocket's descent was irresponsible and risky. "All spacefaring nations should follow established best practices, and do their part to share this type of information in advance," Nelson wrote, "to allow reliable predictions of potential debris impact risk, especially for heavy-lift vehicles, like the Long March 5B, which carry a significant risk of loss of life and property."

He added: "Doing so is critical to the responsible use of space and to ensure the safety of people here on earth".

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