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NASA's claims on Chinese rocket challenged

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China is a responsible spacefaring actor when it comes to dealing with rocket debris, observers said, challenging NASA Administrator Bill Nelson's accusations regarding Chinese rocket debris.

Nelson published a statement on NASA's website on Sunday claiming that China "did not share specific trajectory information as their Long March 5B rocket fell back to Earth". He also made comments about the "responsible use of space" and ensuring "the safety of people here on Earth".

The statement came after a string of sensationalist Western media reports about the risks of

rocket debris crashing over an inhabited area in what they called "an uncontrolled reentry" of a Chinese Long March 5B.

The rocket, which blasted off on July 24 from the Wenchang Space Launch Center in Hainan province, was used to send China's Wentian space lab module to dock with the country's Tiangong space station.

Yang Yuguang, a senior space industry observer and vice-chair of the International Astronautical Federation's Space Transportation Committee, said on Thursday in Beijing that Nelson's claims were groundless and meant to hype up issues related to China's space programs.

At least 90 percent of the Long March 5B is made of a thin, combus-

tible metal casing that will burn up on reentry into the atmosphere. The amount of components capable of enduring this and finally reaching Earth is almost equal to that of any other type of rocket, Yang said.

Wu Peixin, an aerospace industry observer, said that the US must have been able to calculate the time and general location of the Long March 5B's descent to Earth, given that China had published detailed data about this type of rocket several times before its reentry on previous occasions.

Before its reentry at 12:55 am on Sunday, China had published daily updates on the orbital data of the rocket since July 27 on the China Manned Space Agency's website.

Ecosystem monitoring satellite launched

By ZHAO LEI
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China deployed a terrestrial ecosystem observation satellite on Thursday morning to facilitate the country's environmental protection efforts.

According to the China National Space Administration, the satellite, which is named after Goumang, the god of forestry, spring and the orient in ancient Chinese mythology, was carried by a Long March 4B rocket that blasted off at 11:08 am from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center in North China's Shanxi province.

Soon after the launch, the satellite entered its planned position in a sun-synchronous orbit 506 kilometers above Earth.

Designed and built by the China Academy of Space Technology, Goumang has four mission payloads — a laser radar, a multi-angle multispectral camera, a hyperspectral detector and a polarization imager. The satellite can detect and measure

vegetation biomass, atmospheric aerosol and chlorophyll fluorescence, and can also obtain the remote-sensing information of global forest carbon sinks.

The spacecraft is mainly tasked with detecting and measuring carbon elements in ecosystems.

Its service is expected to improve the efficiency and accuracy of carbon sink measurement, and boost the country's carbon peaking and neutrality efforts, the space administration said.

It will also be used to monitor and survey terrestrial ecology and resources, track and evaluate major environmental protection projects, monitor the atmospheric environment as well as obtain data about the effect of aerosols on climate change.

Moreover, the satellite will provide support to other fields such as agricultural forecasting and disaster relief, according to the administration.

This was the second satellite launched by China this year for



A terrestrial ecosystem carbon monitoring satellite is sent into orbit from the Taiyuan Satellite Launch Center on Thursday.

ZHENG BIN / XINHUA

environmental protection purposes.

In mid-April, the Atmospheric Environmental Surveyor satellite was launched from the Taiyuan center and is being used to observe air pollution, greenhouse gases and other environmental elements. It is expected to provide data for research on climate and ecological changes, and will help to forecast agricultural yields and hazards, its designers said.

Also launched on the same rocket on Thursday were two small satellites, namely the Jiaotong 4, which will be used to collect information about ship movements and flight statuses around the globe, and the Minhang Youth, which is designated to act as an educational platform for young students to partake in space science research.

The launch marked the 430th mission for the Long March rocket family.

China has carried out 25 space launch missions so far this year, and it plans to conduct more than 60 launches in 2022.