

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0495/07  
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to the Council

Subject: Destruction of a meteorological satellite by a Chinese ballistic missile

China's launch on 11 January of a ballistic missile for the purpose of destroying a 750-kilogramme meteorological satellite has alarmed the international community and prompted public criticism from countries such as the USA and Japan, which are fearful that the event marks the start of a military 'space race' initiated by China.

It appears that the US secret services detected the launch, which has yet to be either confirmed or denied by the Chinese Government.

If the reports are true, this would be the first test of its kind in over 20 years. Furthermore, it would go against China's traditional opposition to the militarisation of outer space.

There is a serious risk associated with the event, on account of the space debris produced when an object of such size is destroyed: the fragments thereof may remain in high-speed orbit for a lengthy period of time and may damage other countries' satellites, both military and civilian.

What information does the Council hold concerning this event, and what action has it taken (or is it intending to take) in response to it?