

# Russia, Kazakhstan may manage space base together

February 14 2013, by Peter Leonard

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(AP)—Russia may suspend its lease for some facilities at the Baikonur space complex in Kazakhstan, opening the way for its joint administration by the two countries, a senior Russian space official says.

The [launch pad](#) for satellite-deploying Zenit rockets at the complex will be the first facility to be reviewed, Roscosmos deputy head Sergei Savelyev told the Izvestia newspaper in an interview published Thursday.

Baikonur is a sprawling complex in the remote south of the oil-rich Central Asian nation. It was the site of Yuri Gagarin's historic maiden flight to space in 1961 and holds 15 launch pads, including the one used by the [Soyuz spacecraft](#), which remains the only transport available for [astronauts](#)—including American ones—traveling to the [International Space Station](#).

Statements from Kazakhstan about the complex had provoked speculation that it was seeking higher rental payments, but officials seem mainly intent on expanding the country's own [space industry](#).

Russia currently pays Kazakhstan \$115 million annually to use the Soviet-built [cosmodrome](#) under a deal that expires in 2050. Russia spends \$160 million per year operating the complex.

"I want to stress that there is no talk of Russia leaving Baikonur. New forms of cooperation are being worked upon," Savelyev told the Moscow-based daily.

While taking over partial management of facilities, Kazakhstan also wants training for its own space industry technicians, Savelyev said.

Roscosmos did not immediately respond to AP requests for more information.

Russia has bristled over what it perceives as obstructionism from Kazakhstan over Baikonur. Kazakhstan last year announced that it would allow no more than 12 launches in 2013 of the heavy-load Proton vehicle, less than the 14 hoped for by Russia. The limitation represents a grave threat to Russia's satellite-launching business.

"We asked them to reconsider the parameters laid out in the government decree of Dec. 28," Savelyev said. "Our partners in Kazakhstan are meeting us halfway."

Savelyev said officials from both governments will meet in March to work on a roadmap for future cooperation that would culminate with a new arrangement on Baikonur.

Kazakhstan space agency chief Talgat Musabayev laid out his country's vision in a meeting on Wednesday.

"By 2030, Kazakhstan should broaden its niche in the global space market and bring a number of ongoing projects to their logical conclusions," Musabayev said.

A keystone of those plans is the creation of the Bayterek launch pad at Baikonur. The slow progress and the spiraling costs of that operation have tested relations between the two countries.

Bayterek was intended to be used with the Angara booster rocket currently under development in Russia. But Moscow has indicated that

its own Vostochny [space](#) complex in the Far East, due to be completed in 2018, could be used for the Angara instead.

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