

Russia to continue using Kazakhstan's space center

April 12 2013



Russian President Vladimir Putin listens during a live video link with the International Space Station from a construction site of new cosmodrome Vostochny (Eastern) at Eastern Siberia on Friday, April 12, 2013. Russia celebrates 52nd anniversary of the first manned space flight on April 12. Putin said on Friday Russia would continue to lease the Baikonur space complex in Kazakhstan despite recent statements from space officials that Russia may suspend its lease. (AP Photo/RIA Novosti, Alexei Nikolsky, Presidential Press Service)

Brushing off reports that Russia may ditch its space base in Kazakhstan, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Friday that Moscow would continue to lease the space complex.

Russia has a lease deal to use Baikonur until 2050 for an annual fee of \$115 million. Amid tensions over fees payments, a Russian official said in February that Russia may suspend its lease for some facilities at Baikonur.

Marking the 52nd anniversary of [Yuri Gagarin](#) making the first [manned space flight](#), Putin toured the construction site of the Vostochny launch pad in the Far East which is designed to ease Russia's reliance on its ex-Soviet neighbor.

Officials have put the total cost of the Vostochny project at about \$10 billion. Putin, however, insisted that Russia would not leave the base in Baikonur.

Although Russia has several smaller launch pads it is only from the steppes in Kazakhstan's Baikonur that the [Russian space agency](#) launches its manned mission. Gagarin made the world's first manned space flight from the Baikonur [launch pad](#), which services manned flights to this day.



Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, listens during a live video link with the International Space Station from a construction site of new cosmodrome Vostochny (Eastern) at Eastern Siberia on Friday, April 12, 2013. Russia celebrates 52nd anniversary of the first manned space flight on April 12. Cosmodrome Vostochny is written in Cyrillic in the middle. Putin said on Friday Russia would continue to lease the Baikonur space complex in Kazakhstan despite recent statements from space officials that Russia may suspend its lease. (AP Photo/RIA Novosti, Alexei Nikolsky, Presidential Press Service, Pool)

The first launch from Vostochny, which is located in the sparsely populated Amur region, 5,500 kilometers (3,400 miles) east of Moscow, and just about 100 kilometers (60 miles) away from the border with China, is expected in 2015 and the first manned flight in 2018.

The government would earmark some 1.6 trillion rubles (\$50 billion) for the space industry through 2020 to make up for the years of under-investment, Putin said quoted by the Itar-TASS news agency.

To mark what's celebrated in Russia as the Space Day, Putin had a chat via a video link with the six-man crew of the [International Space Station](#) and assured that the new Russian space center would be open to U.S. and European space agencies.

Putin said in televised remarks the site of the new cosmodrome was carefully chosen and would allow cosmonauts land on water. The Sea of Okhotsk on Russia's Pacific coast is 600 kilometers (375 miles) east.

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Citation: Russia to continue using Kazakhstan's space center (2013, April 12) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-04-russia-kazakhstan-space-center.html>

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