

SOVIET ANNOUNCES FIRST CIVILIAN AGENCY FOR SPACE PROGRAM

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Body

The Soviet Union, which has kept its space program under tight military controls since it launched the first satellite in 1957, has announced the creation of its first civilian space agency.

The Government newspaper Izvestia, in announcing the establishment of the agency earlier this month, said it would be responsible for the design, construction and use of spacecraft for scientific research, remote sensing applications, such as surveys of resources and crops, and joint space programs with other countries.

Izvestia identified the new agency as the Main Administration for the Creation and Use of Space Technology for the Economy and for Scientific Research. It is to be known by the acronym Glavkosmos, composed of the Russian terms for "main" and "space."

Head of Agency Named

The newspaper did not specify the position of the agency in the table of organization of the Soviet Government. Agencies designated "main administrations" are usually subdivisions of Cabinet-level ministries, but some main administrations are independent. For example, the Soviet mapping agency is known as the Main Administration for Geodesy and Cartography, and the censorship agency is known as the Main Administration for Safeguarding State Secrets in the Press.

The head of the new space agency was identified by Izvestia as A. I. Dunayev. The chief officials and scientists of the Soviet space program have long been shrouded in secrecy, and no background information could be immediately found in available Soviet or Western reference books.

The only other space-related agency that has been publicly disclosed in the Soviet Union is the Space Research Institute, a unit of the Soviet Academy of Sciences that was founded in 1965. It was this institute, initially headed by Georgi I. Petrov and after 1973 by Roald Z. Sagdeyev, that was generally regarded in the West as performing some civilian coordinating functions.

'Of Interest to Many'

However, in announcing Glavkosmos, Izvestia said: "It goes without saying that the effective use of space technology is of interest to many Government ministries and agencies and to scientific organizations. The space program has reached such scope as to require the creation of a special coordinating agency."

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According to the announcement, the new agency will consider proposals for projects, work out long-term plans and administer programs. It will be responsible for the launching of spacecraft and for the collection and dissemination of their information. Launching vehicles are expected to be supplied by the military.

Among the international projects that the agency will administer, according to Izvestia, are the Interkosmos program, established in the middle 1960's by nations in the Soviet bloc, and the search-and-rescue satellite program, an international effort involving the Soviet Union, the United States, Canada and France. It pinpoints the spots where airliners have crashed or ships are in distress anywhere in the world.

It was not clear from the Izvestia announcement whether the new civilian agency would administer any manned flights involving Salyut space stations and Soyuz spacecraft. The emphasis appeared to be on automated space vehicles concerned with remote sensing that have until now been part of the Cosmos series, a mixture of civilian and military missions in which nearly 1,700 vehicles have been launched since the series began in 1962.

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