



Cosmonauts Eager, Hopeful for Reboot of Bulgaria's Space Program

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Lt. Gen. Georgi Ivanov, who became Bulgaria's first cosmonaut 30 years ago, has urged the government to reboot the Bulgarian Space Program. Photo by BGNES

Bulgaria's first **cosmonaut** Gen. **Georgi Ivanov** has urged the government to take steps to reinvigorate and develop the Bulgarian **space** program.

Ivanov, who flew in open **space** on a Soviet-Bulgarian mission in 1979, spoke Sunday in Sofia at a press conference dedicated to the 50th year since the first manned **space** flight – that of **Yuri Gagarin** – on **April 12, 1961**.

Ivanov is the head of the Bulgarian committee for marking the anniversary of the Gagarin flight. When Gagarin's flight was announced, Ivanov was a sophomore in the Bulgarian military pilot school. He said he and his classmates believed that it will be forever before a Bulgarian would fly into **space**.

Ivanov pointed out that the day of Gagarin's flight has just been declared International Day of Human **Space** Flight, and that a monument of **Yuri Gagarin** was built in Houston, TX, and another one will be erected in London.

"After his landing on the **moon**, **Neil Armstrong** said that Yuri Alekseevich Gagarin called us all in **space**," the Bulgarian **cosmonaut** said.

Ivanov believes it is very unlikely that extraterrestrial life will be found in our galaxy; he reminded that scientists recently found a planet which is believed to have similar life conditions to those of the Earth but that it is 20 light years away.

The **cosmonaut** announced he is about to have talks with President **Georgi Parvanov**, Prime Minister **Boyko Borisov**, and Parliament Chair **Tsetska Tsacheva** to push for a reboot of the Bulgarian **space** program.

"I still feel like flying in **space**. I remember every single think from my flight ni open **space**," said the first Bulgarian **cosmonaut**.

Ivanov said that the next Bulgarian to fly in **space** might be a **space** tourist; however, he is convinced that the Bulgarian scientists have the capacity to create a new **space** program that can get Bulgarian cosmonauts in **space** again.

A total of 520 cosmonauts from 38 countries have been in open **space** to date, include two Bulgarians, **Georgi Ivanov** in 1979 and **Alexander Alexandrov** in 1988, both on **Soviet Union** flights.

Ivanov stressed that Intercosmos was a unique program created in the 1960s that allowed small nations such as Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Cuba, and Mongolia to have cosmonauts. He said a reboot of the Bulgarian **space** program can build upon the traditions and achievements to date.

In the early 1970s Bulgaria became the 18th "**space**" nation by launching its own equipment in **space**; at the end of the 1970s, Bulgaria became the third producer of **space** food in the world after the **USSR** and the USA.

With Ivanov's flight in 1979, Bulgaria was the sixth nation to send a man in **space**.

Ivanov underscored the importance of **space** programs for the development of sciences as over 50 000 scientific discoveries have been made in that framework since Gagarin's flight, and most of them have been introduced in everyday life.

Col. **Krasimir Stoyanov**, who is trained Bulgarian **cosmonaut** still expecting a **space** mission in which he can take part, also attended Sunday's press conference alongside Ivanov.

"The decision for sending the next Bulgarian in **space** will be made on the highest state level; this can happen within the next few years," Stoyanov believes.

He thinks Bulgaria can take part in the **Mars 500** experiment, a multi-part ground-based experiment simulating a manned flight to Mars. The experiment's facility is located at the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Biomedical Problems (IBMP) in Moscow, **Russia**.

A Bulgarian **space** greenhouse for growing food, described as one of the greatest Bulgarian scientific achievements, will most likely be placed on board of the **Mars 500** ship.

Stoyanov emphasized that with its unique **space** greenhouse Bulgaria is the first nation which managed to grow wheat and vegetables in "**space**", or **space**-simulated conditions.

"A Bulgarian **cosmonaut** can apply to take part in the first manned flight to Mars, which is expected in 2025-2030. Why not?" Stoyanov said. He further mentioned he himself is trying to keep in shape even though he has left the Bulgarian Army and now works for the **Space** Research Institute of the **Bulgarian Academy of Sciences** where he got a Ph. D.

The **Space** Research Institute of the BAS is working on 20 **space**-related projects on a five-year contract with the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Tags: [Georgi Ivanov](#), [Alexander Alexandrov](#), [Krasimir Stoyanov](#), [space](#), [space flight](#), [Space Research Institute](#), [Bulgarian Academy of Sciences](#), [cosmonaut](#), [Yuri Gagarin](#), [Neil Armstrong](#), [Russia](#), [Soviet](#)

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