The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ex-Svyazinvest Chief Buys 1961 Capsule

April 13, 2011

Spectators watching fireworks in Victory Park late Tuesday amid celebrations of Gagarin's historic space flight. **Nikolay Korchekov**

Former Svyazinvest CEO Yevgeny Yurchenko has paid $2.9 million for a 1961 Soviet space capsule that carried a cosmonaut mannequin and a live dog into space and plans to return it to Russia.

Yurchenko bought the Vostok 3KA-2 at Sotheby's in New York on Tuesday, said David Redden, a spokesman for the auction house. The total price included the buyer's premium, he said.

Redden said Yurchenko planned to take the capsule back to his home country.

Yurchenko resigned abruptly amid a power struggle at Svyazinvest in September and now heads the A.S. Popov investment fund.

"I hope that Vostok will take its rightful place in one of the nation's museums devoted to the history of the formation of the Russian space program," Yurchenko said in a statement issued by Sotheby's.

The capsule, which is made of aluminum alloy and measures just over 2 meters in diameter, was used on a test run for the spacecraft that carried the first man into outer space. Its pre-sale estimate was $2 million to $10 million, and it was offered on the 50th anniversary of the manned mission. It was classified "secret" until 1986.

Though it was scorched during its re-entry into the Earth's atmosphere, it brought a mutt named Zvyozdochka, or Little Star, safely back from space. The life-size space-suited mannequin was nicknamed Ivan Ivanovich.

Sotheby's said the anonymous seller bought it privately from the Russians years ago.

The capsule went into space weeks before the manned flight of Vostok 3KA-3, which carried cosmonaut Yury Gagarin on April 12, 1961.

Redden said that getting the Vostok 3KA-2 back to Russia might be complicated because it is classified by the U.S. State Department as a space object. "Interestingly enough, it requires some special licenses," he said.

Russia's UN ambassador has presented Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon with a UN flag flown in space to celebrate the first International Day of Human Space Flight honoring Gagarin's historic journey 50 years ago.
Vitaly Churkin told Ban that the small blue-and-white flag was taken on a space journey three years ago by astronauts from Russia and South Korea.
"I hope it's going to be an important momento for you to mark the first International Day of Human [Space] Flight," Churkin said.
Ban thanked him in Russian, saying "spasibo."
The UN General Assembly approved a resolution last Thursday declaring April 12 the annual International Day of Human Space Flight.

Federal Space Agency chief Anatoly Perminov told the Federation Council on Wednesday that his agency would test a next-generation spacecraft and even consider a manned mission to Mars.
Perminov said the Mars mission would take place on a new spacecraft fitted with a nuclear propulsion system that would cut the flight to a month.
"It would be absurd to fly on the vehicles and with the engines that we have," he said, adding that it now takes 18 months to reach Mars, Itar-Tass reported.
He said the propulsion system would be created by next year and the new spacecraft would be ready by 2025. The first flight to Mars could take place after 2035, he said.

(AP, MT)

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/04/13/ex-svyazinvest-chief-buys-1961-capsule-a6297