

Putin Floats Idea of Creating New Space Ministry

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Putin attending a space industry meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Rogozin in Blagoveshchensk on Friday.

As Russia celebrated the 62nd anniversary of the first manned space flight, President Vladimir Putin said he might create a space ministry and a State Duma deputy suggested that anti-Kremlin activists should be fired off into space.

Putin called for Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin, who oversees the space industry, and the rest of the government to discuss the idea of forming a space ministry.

"I would ask all Cabinet members to think about whether such a ministry should be created," Putin said at a meeting dedicated to the development of the space industry in Blagoveshchensk in the Far East region of Amur.

He added, however, that the first priority would be to properly equip the Federal Space

Agency, which is currently a standalone government agency monitored by Rogozin but answering directly to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.

Putin also pointed out that Russia lags behind in certain parts of the space industry and that it should shift focus from manned flights to deep space exploration.

Earlier Putin inspected the Vostochny launch pad, which has been under construction since 2010. It is intended to reduce Russia's dependency on the Baikonur Cosmodrome, leased from Kazakhstan for \$115 million a year.

Despite recent tensions with Kazakhstan over Baikonur payments, Putin said Russia would continue to use Baikonur in the future.

In Moscow, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the flamboyant leader of Liberal Democratic Party, suggested to reporters that opposition leaders Boris Nemtsov, Sergei Udaltsov and Alexei Navalny should be sent to another planet "in honor of Cosmonauts Day," Interfax reported.

Cosmonauts Day marks the milestone flight by 27-year-old Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin into space on April 12, 1961.

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