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AIMING HIGH - FIRST STEPS OF ISRAELI RESEARCH ROCKETS IN THE LATE 1960'S

Abstract

During the late 1960's, there was a sudden interest in rocketry, at Israel's technical-industrial high school at the city of Haifa, affiliated with the Technion - Israel's institute of technology. The school, BOSMAT, was founded in the 1930's, and became the first educational institute for high school students, with its main focus on technology. Several small and medium size rockets were designed and built, and launched to a height of several kilometers.

The paper will describe the motivation to construct and launch these rockets, as well as the technical aspects and influence on the general public - decades before Israel embarked on its space program, culminating in the first orbital launch of 1988.

The small to medium size rockets used solid propellants, and were used to demonstrate the technical capabilities of the students, as well as a publicity stunt to elevate the prestige of the institute who built them.

A side anecdote is that the Egyptian intelligence examined the data on these crude vehicles, and took them very seriously, issuing a technical estimation about the operational combat use in war.

All the rockets in the series were built and launched in a relatively short period of about 5 years, and there was no continuation to the "missile club" (as it was called) of the BOSMAT technical school.

Nevertheless, the rockets had a great influence on the public arena, and the launches were reported extensively by the Israeli media.

The paper will shed light on an obscured piece of Israel's long voyage to space, and it is a continuation of the author's long series of papers on Israeli space history, that was started almost a decade ago.