

49th IAA HISTORY OF ASTRONAUTICS SYMPOSIUM (E4)
Scientific & technical histories (2)

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SOUTH AMERICAN SPACE ERA

Abstract

Since the late 1950s, space has become another dramatic arena for countries to prove their technological superiority, military firepower and—by extension—its political-economic system. From 1967, in South America, Brazil started the first space activities in the region with the launch of "Sonda I". Since then South American countries have been developing space capacity individually in order to provide basic space-based services and a small autonomy in this area.

As the countries in the region develop their activities, the most significant steps have been initiated by Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Bolivia among others. Brazil currently has a well established institute of space research, one astronaut sent to the ISS and ongoing efforts to develop its own launch capability. Argentina, on the other hand, is currently working in the construction of Tronador II, a light payload satellite injector, based on previous models Tronador Ia and Ib successfully launched from Puerto Belgrano naval base. In Peru, the national Aerospace Research and development commission (CONIDA) launched the first space Peruvian Probe, Paulet, from Punta Lobos air force base in Pucusana in 2006. Bolivia is also making its mark in the sector; with its first telecommunication satellite in 2013 and recent efforts to develop a remote sensing satellite.

The space programs in South America, not only address a technological gap, but also offer a chance to inspire people and bring to their attention the potential and benefits of the space sector. This paper provides a historical review of the evolution of the space activities in South America and its relation with historical and political aspects, as well as important steps need to taken to further develop the space sector in the region. This paper addresses directly the outcomes of the defense ministers meeting of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), in November 2011, where the representatives collectively deemed

to prioritize the creation of a South American Space Agency and its collaboration through UNASUR.