



Middle East Spotlight

The Final Frontier: U.S.-Israel Space Cooperation

For over three decades, the United States and Israel worked together to “boldly go” where only a few other countries have ventured—space. Two recent developments highlight the Jewish state’s pivotal role in the partnership to explore “the final frontier”—the NASA-Israel Space Agency (ISA) agreement in October 2015 and the introduction of the United States and Israel Space Cooperation Act in September 2016.

The U.S.-Israel space relationship began in 1985, when ISA and NASA began cooperating on several projects on a case-by-case basis. A decade later, the two agencies regularized cooperation and signed their first [agreement](#) outlining areas of mutual cooperation in the peaceful use of space. As a result, Israeli Air Force Col. Ilan Ramon was selected in 1997 to train in the United States with NASA. Ramon would become Israel’s first astronaut; his life and six others were tragically cut short in the 2003 Columbia space shuttle disaster.

In June 2011, three Israeli experiments took place on the Endeavor space shuttle. One was sent to the International Space Station (ISS), the first Israeli experiment to take place aboard the ISS.

And just last year, in October 2015, NASA and ISA formally entered into a new [agreement](#) to bolster collaboration on civil space activities. Under this deal, NASA will be able to utilize Israeli innovation and technology in U.S. space programs—including future missions to Mars and many other endeavors.

NASA Administrator Charles Bolden praised the new accord, stating “Our two countries have had a long history of cooperation in space exploration, scientific discovery and research, and we look forward to the opportunities this new agreement provides us to build upon this partnership.”

Adding to this momentum, on Sept. 9, U.S. Reps. Derek Kilmer (D-WA), Jim Bridenstine (R-OK), Marc Veasey (D-TX) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) introduced the [United States and Israel Space Cooperation Act](#). This bipartisan legislation would advance space cooperation by encouraging collaboration between NASA and ISA scientists.

“Space plays a vital role in national security and is an important aspect of our everyday lives,” said Rep. Bridenstine. “Innovations in this area keep our citizens safe while enhancing their quality of life. This bill will allow us to continue advancing these goals alongside one of our greatest allies.”

“For decades, the United States has worked with our allies to pursue new frontiers in science and space,” said Rep. Kilmer. “This bill allows us to work with one of our key partners to continue that pursuit.”

As the United States and Israel strengthen their ties across many important areas, space exploration of “the final frontier” provides ample opportunity for the two allies to deepen their bilateral relationship for decades to come.