

## Brazil Expects to Resume Space Program in Three Years

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The Alcântara Base in the northeastern Brazilian state of Maranhão should be ready for major launches in three years at the most, according to the Brazilian authorities.

This is the forecast made by the president of the Brazilian Space Agency (AEB), Sérgio Gaudenzi. "We still do not have the Alcântara base ready to launch spacecraft, for example. But I hope that within 2 or 3 years, with the additional infrastructure, we will be capable of launches such as that of the Cyclone missile, which is a Brazilian joint venture with Ukrania," he says.

Up to now the only launches made from the base have been of probe missiles. Alcântara is considered the world's best base, for its geographical location and the regularity of its climate, factors that facilitate launches.

"The base is located nearly on the line of the Equator, 2 degrees south of the Equator, thus making use of the thrust of the Earth's rotation, which reduces the amount of fuel needed to launch a missile," the AEB president explained.

In August, 2003, a Satellite Launching Vehicle exploded at the Alcântara Base, killing 21 people. To repair the damage caused by the accident, the government has been allocating an additional US\$ 44.2 million in annual funds, beyond the US\$ 16.3 million spent each year on maintenance.

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