

SEND TO A FRIEND **Russian Shuttle Heads for Display Under**By **Stewart Taggart**Special to *SPACE.com*
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SYDNEY, Australia - One of Russias Buran space shuttles, a Soviet Union-era clone of the American [space shuttle](#), has been purchased by an Australian company, which plans to put it on display in Sydney.

The space vehicle, Soviet-designed, which incorporates publicly available records of NASAs civilian space shuttle program, flew 25 test flights between 1985 and 1988.

The shuttle to be put on display here is the second of five built under the Soviet Unions Buran space program. The so-called Buran 002 incorporates several design improvements over the first Buran space shuttle, which was the only one of the group to have actually flown in space.

The Buran 002 is equipped with turbojet engines adapted from Soviet fighter jets, enabling it to take off and land from conventional airfields. It was also the only one built capable of carrying astronauts. Other shuttles in the Buran series were designed to be un-piloted.

The estimated \$14 billion Buran program was pursued by the Soviet Union as a means of matching the American space shuttle program. The Buran shuttle effort was suspended in 1989 due to lack of funds.



Sydney-based businessman David Hammer heard about the existence of the Buran 002 during a trip to Russia in 1998. Following up contacts built up from a previous purchase of a Soviet-era Foxtrot Hunter submarine now on display in Long Beach, California, Hammer visited the Zhukovsky military airfield, 30 miles (48 kilometers) north of Moscow, where the Buran 002 was languishing.

After buying and shipping the fully-functional vehicle from Russia to Australia, where it arrived February 10, Hammer plans to put it on display on a refurbished dock on Sydney Harbor starting June 11. Visitors will be to visit the cockpit, view the crew quarters, and move through the fuselage before leaving via the tail.

Asked whether he might try to fly the vehicle, Hammer said his primary interest is in using it as an educational tool for the worlds next generation of space farers: young people.

"I honestly believe children should be entitled to touch and feel the future, outside of the schoolroom," he said.

The display will include a history of the shuttle, and a realistic mock-up of a Soviet-era mission control room.

The Buran 002 represents an impressive achievement of Soviet engineering, in many ways surpassing the U.S. shuttle upon which it was based, Hammer said. As such, the display will give visitors another view of Russias space endeavors apart from the often hapless, crisis-driven history of Russias space station [Mir](#).

"Were been quite surprised at just how few people knew about this Buran shuttle program, and just how advanced it was," Hammer said.



Hammer declined to say how much he paid for the shuttle, although the Buran 002 was believed to have cost the Soviet Union as much as \$3 billion to construct. Its safe to assume he got a significant discount on that price.

Like the U.S. space shuttle, the Buran was developed to deliver and [return cargo](#) to and from space, as well as to conduct research, service satellites and possibly one day engage in space manufacturing.

The 103-ton Buran is 118 feet (36 meters) long, 56 feet (17 meters) high and has a wingspan of 79 feet (24 meters), and was designed to carry as much as 30 tons into space, and 20 tons back to [Earth](#). It looks almost identical to its U.S. counterpart.

Perhaps the high point of the Soviet Unions Buran program came in November 1988, when an un-piloted flight of Buran 001 was completed with a successful landing at the [Baikonur](#) spaceport in Kazakstan.

The shuttle circled Earth twice in a roughly 155 mile (250 kilometer) high orbit, eventually landing within 3 feet (1 meter) of the Baikonur runways center line, despite a 34 mile (55 kilometer) crosswind typical of the Kazakstan steppe where the spaceport is situated.



The only reason the flight was so short is that the shuttles prototype automated control systems werent fully developed. Only five of the shuttles 39,000 heat-resistant underside tiles were lost upon reentry.

Designed to carry two to four crew members and up to six passengers, the shuttle was built of conventional aircraft-grade aluminum alloy D 16.

Buran plans to keep the shuttle on display in Sydney Harbor until 2002, when it will be taken to Melbourne and put on display until 2004. After that, he plans to display the vehicle internationally, but said final deals havent been made.

Since Hammers purchase, one of the other Buran shuttles was offered for auction in Russia on the World Wide Web. Bidding, set to close March 15, had reportedly reached \$3 million by Thursday, March 2.

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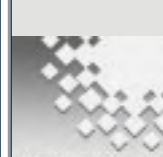
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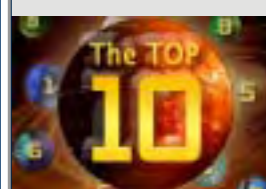
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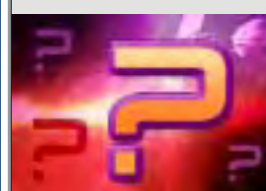
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