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# Washington Air and Space Museum awaits Israeli memorabilia

• By JUDY SIEGEL

Even though Israel is a member of the "exclusive club" of countries that have built space satellites, Washington's US National Air and Space Museum hasn't received any space-related objects from Israel to display there, *The Jerusalem Post* has learned.

The only Israeli mention in the huge museum, which is part of the Smithsonian Institution and is located opposite Capitol Hill, is a photo of the doomed Columbia space shuttle astronaut team that included the late Israel Air Force Col. Ilan Ramon, who died tragically in the crash seven years ago. So says Dr. Roger Launius, the senior curator of the museum and former chief historian at NASA, who is due to fly to Israel next week to speak at the Fifth Ilan Ramon International Space Conference, organized



DR. ROGER LAUNIUS

by Herzliya's Fischer Institute for Strategic Research with help from the Ministry of Science and Technology.

In an exclusive phone interview from Washington this week, Launius said he would love to have some Israeli space objects. As Israel develops compact satellites, the Washington Museum could display one

that was not used or a model, said the historian, "as satellites are launched and don't come back."

Launius, who is making his first-ever visit to Israel to attend the conference, said that the museum is visited by about eight million people per year, including – he presumes – quite a few Israelis.

Most of the tens of thousands of items on display deal with aeronautics and space, but the oldest ones are hot-air balloons dating back to the late 18th century.

The museum, with a \$14 million annual budget, does not have the funds to purchase air and space memorabilia, but it receives them as donations from NASA and private collectors, Launius said. Surprisingly, the museum hasn't a single NASA space toilet, but it has one from Russia, as well as plenty of freeze-dried food.