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The Institute was established in 1964 as a continuation of the former Laboratory for Meteorology of the Geophysical Institute. The main research focus was on processes taking place in the troposphere. In 1994, the former Ionospheric Department of the Geophysical Institute joined the IAP, thereby expanding the research domain, which now covers the whole atmosphere from the boundary layer up to interplanetary space. Pursuant to Act No. 341/2005 Coll., the Institute became a public research institution as of 1 January 2007.

The Institute deals with scientific investigations of the atmosphere in its whole vertical extent, thus studying the boundary layer, troposphere, upper atmosphere, ionosphere and magnetosphere of the Earth by applying experimental and theoretical methods and numerical simulations. The activities include monitoring and special measurements, data evaluation and their transfer into worldwide data networks, and expertises.

More detailed information about the organisational structure of the Institute and its research and specialised units can be found at the following URL:
<http://www.ufa.cas.cz>