

First Brazilian Astronaut Star of Moscow Press Conference

Contributed by Juliana Andrade
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In a press conference Wednesday, February 8, in Moscow, the three astronauts who will travel to the International Space Station on March 30, aboard a Soyuz spacecapsule, a Russian, an American, and the Brazilian, Marcos Pontes, spoke about their mission - which just happens to be Soyuz 13.

Most of the press conference was in Portuguese, with Pontes the center of attention as many Brazilian journalists asked him questions.

Pontes, who seemed to be in very high spirits, said it was difficult to explain the feelings he had about going into space for the first time.

He called it something incredible for him personally and emphasized the importance of the mission for Brazil, its scientific development and its future space projects.

He spoke at length about the experiments he will perform. "The experiments are of great importance for Brazil," he declared.

Pontes was referring to the eight or nine experiments he will perform in the space station which were developed by the Brazilian Space Agency, the Ministry of Science and Technology, and various research and academic centers.

He explained that the experiments covered a wide gamut, but were concentrated in the area of nanotechnology.

The Russian cosmonaut, Pavel Belyayev, who is mission commander, and the American, Jeffrey Williams, also participated in the press conference.

Asked if they were worried about the fact that the mission was number 13, all three of the astronauts said they were basically not superstitious and therefore unconcerned about that.

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