

Countdown to Brazil's First Astronaut Liftoff Brings Space to the Front Page

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The liftoff of Russian spaceship Soyuz TMA-8, which will take to space the first Brazilian astronaut, Lieutenant-colonel Marcos Pontes, is scheduled for next Wednesday (29), 11:29 pm, Brasília time, at Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

In a press conference to Radiobrás radio stations, the President of the Brazilian Space Agency (AEB), Sérgio Gaudenzi, said that the Centenary Mission - this is how the mission is being called since it celebrates the 100 anniversary of Brazilian Alberto Santos Dumont flying his 14 Bis in Paris - will give an impulse to science and technology development in Brazil.

Gaudenzi said that Pontes' trip opens the possibility to make the Brazilian Space Program closer to the country's population, to make it more known. He emphasizes that Brazil is part of a select group of countries that have complete space programs, which means to have a launching center, a launcher vehicle, and satellites.

In addition to Marcos Pontes, two other astronauts, the American Jeffrey Williams, and Russian Pavel Vinogradov, integrate the crew that will travel to the International Space Station (ISS). Pontes will stay eight days in the station. The other two astronauts will stay there for six months.

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