

Brazilian Astronaut Carries Brazil's Seal into Space

Contributed by Nelson Motta
Wednesday, 29 March 2006

Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva participated, Tuesday, March 28, in a ceremony at the Palácio do Planalto in Brazilian capital Brasília of the presentation of the seal and medal that Brazilian astronaut, Marcos César Pontes, will carry with him into space.

Pontes, the first Brazilian astronaut, will travel this Wednesday, March 29, aboard a Russian Soyuz spacecraft to the International Space Station.

The seal and medal commemorate the Pontes mission, which is called "Centenary Mission" (Missão Centenário), in honor of the fact that it is taking place one hundred years after the first public flight of a powered aircraft, which was piloted by the Brazilian aviation pioneer, Alberto Santo Dumont.

Brazil's Minister of Science and Technology, Sergio Rezende, and the acting president of the Brazilian Space Agency, Himilcom Carvalho, gave Lula replicas of the seal and medal which depict Santos Dumont's aircraft, known as the 14 Bis, the Soyuz spaceship, the planet Earth and the likeness of astronaut Pontes.

The launch of the Soyuz capsule carrying Pontes, along with two other astronauts, a Russian and an American, is scheduled for 11:30 pm Brasília time; 9:30 EST.

Led by minister of Science and Technology, Sergio Rezende, a number of government authorities will accompany the launch of the Soyuz TMA-8 spacecraft.

Pontes space venture honors the 100th anniversary of the first ever public flights of a heavier-than-air, powered aircraft, which took place in Paris in October and November 1906.

On November 12, 1906, Brazilian aviation pioneer, Alberto Santos-Dumont, took off, flew his aircraft, the 14-bis, over 200 meters during 21 seconds at a speed of slightly more than 37 kilometers an hour, and landed safely.

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