

## Brazil's First Astronaut May Help with Better Drugs and Search of ETs

Contributed by Nelson Motta  
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During his conversation via videoconference with Brazil's first astronaut, the Brazilian Minister of Science and Technology, Sergio Rezende, declared that the presence of Marcos Pontes aboard the International Space Station had given "a phenomenal boost to Brazil's space program."

He pointed out that the Brazillian scientific community had drawn up experiments for Pontes to carry out in a microgravity environment.

"Those experiments will be important contributions to Brazilian research programs," said the minister.

Rezende asked Pontes about one experiment that had caught the attention of the Russians: a "protein" cloud interaction experiment, which uses a substance that gives lightning bugs luminosity. It studies atomization and interaction of bioluminous proteins in a microgravity environment.

The experiment, said the minister, could make it possible to find ways to develop faster acting medicines, identify microorganisms that cause diseases in water supplies and even aid in the search for life on other planets.

Pontes said the experiment would be concluded "tomorrow" (that is, today, April 6) and that so far all the experiments had been successful.

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